

COCONUT MANAGEMENT QUEENSLAND 2019



REPORT
A must read for every
North Queenslander



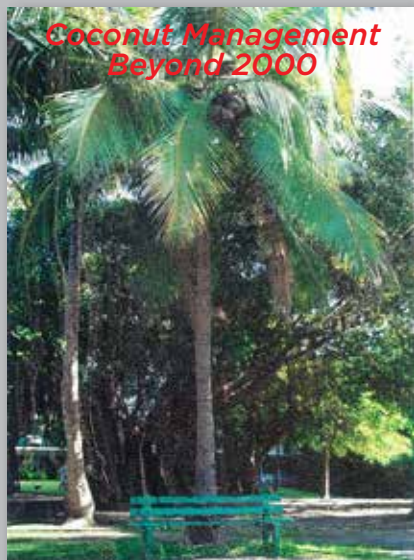
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HURSE IRONS
CLIMBING IN THE NEW SYSTEM

Introduction

The coconut palm is the quintessential embodiment of the tropical experience, and is an integral part of the North Queensland visual thrill and lifestyle. An extremely valuable asset to the environment, the economy and the community. This palm is of billion dollar benefit on a number of fronts, yet despite this, it remains the single most misunderstood, undervalued, disrespected and mismanaged natural asset in the state of Queensland.

This document highlights and addresses a range of spectacular misunderstandings and dire short falls in the interest of **public safety, workplace safety, harvest standards, beach erosion, nutrition, wildlife, the economy, sustainability and to be clear, “commerce”**.

This report follows on from “Coconut Management Beyond 2000”, which was released to North Queensland shires in 1999.



Released in 1999

On this occasion however, given the current condition of Queensland Coconut populations and the status and decline of these, this document circulation has been widened to include all coconut management bodies and beyond.

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Eimeo Beach, Mackay, Queensland



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Coconut Politics

Queensland “coconut palms” have been in steady decline for the last 30 years. It seems that managements have forgotten what attracted people to come here in the first place. As tourism surveys have confirmed, decade after decade “coconut palms” are second only as a visitor draw card to the “Great Barrier Reef”. They have also had an exceptionally positive effect on “domestic immigration” in the north and all things considered it is little wonder Queensland continues to be the fastest growing state in Australia.

Although poorly understood, coconuts have played a massive role in building the tourism industry, creating jobs and building the economy. Whilst armies of tourists and immigrants pour across our borders every year, not all of them are boating, diving and fishing fanatics. Many a “land lubber” in fact came here specifically or was heavily influenced to



Belgian Gardens, Townsville, Queensland

make the move in order to live amongst the coconut palms and to enjoy the majesty, ambiance, exercise, employment, nutrition and decadence they provide. These immigrants bring with them their skills, trades, professions, families, finances and livelihoods. Queensland coconut palms are a literal state builder, from domestic and international tourism through to domestic and international immigration, they continue to demonstrate a powerful draw card effect and have played a leading role in establishing many northern coastal communities in the first place.

Despite the monumental importance of this **God** given asset, Queensland's diminishing coconut palms are constantly in the firing line. Over the last 3 decades particularly these palms have been subjected to a barrage of reduction and extermination pogroms, unleashed and perversely so by the very people who have been put in charge of and are paid to "look after the environment". These may include

national parks, beach protection authorities, certain councilors, some councils, property managers and self-empowered individuals, hell bent on eradicating coconut palms from the landscape, including wild areas, beaches, islands, parks, street scapes and foreshores. Add to this, natural mortality rates, managers removing palms to save on maintenance costs, substandard harvest practices, rising sea levels, overuse of roundup, heavy machinery damage and throw in a few cyclones. Combine this with the sad fact management teams haven't had a serious replanting 30 years in a row and we have arrived at the current result. In most areas, **"Queensland coconut populations have all but collapsed" and represent in number a shadow of their former selves.**

Recent media reportings suggest North Queensland has plenty of coconut palms and it's a wonder Queensland doesn't have a coconut industry. "The reality" is somewhat different. What is considered a medium size copra plantation in New



Guinea is 500,000 palms. Comparatively the entire population of coconut palms in Queensland is less than 100,000, down from 250,000 in the 1980's. **Coconut palms under "urban management de-nut" programs in every single North Queensland shire combined is less than 14,000.** Recent media reportings are a misconception. The facts are it is no wonder Queensland doesn't have a coconut industry, although some small cottage industries do exist. Sadder still is the fact that a large portion of the remanent is in a derelict, severely degraded and lack luster condition.

If many councils could have had their way, coconut palms on council lands would have been eliminated some decades ago. Although there have been numerous attempts at mass extermination over the years, they have failed on every single occasion due to considerable outrage and actions from the communities. People take up petitions, chain themselves to palms, perform street theatre, alert the media and so on.



The communal tranquility values and benefits associated with living amongst the coconut palms are a special privilege that one can't put a dollar value on.

No plant on earth both excites and soothes the senses like a coconut palm.



The beautiful calming fluttering sounds the leaves make as the wind passes through them, the twisting turns and graceful flowing forms of fronds combined with the majestic sway of these beautiful trunks, but ahh the nuts, those wonderful nuts. The jewels in the crown of the tropics.

How is it coconut palms are so loved by so many, yet so hated by others? In the interest of our Queensland quality of life, these contradictory reasonings need to be identified and understood.

The arguments for are clearly outlined in this document and therefore we shall examine the historic and current arguments against:



The all time favorite mantra sung against coconut palms is **“they are not native, they encroach on native flora and fauna and therefore must be cut down and replaced with native trees”**. This line is most favoured by academics who stand against the coconut palm, such as the “Nutty Professor” and his cohorts. The posturing political correctness of the non-native argument is in fact politically, academically, historically and geographically.....incorrect!

- There are a number of historic references and testimonials that clearly show that coconut palms were in the N.Q. area well before white settlement.
- Aborigines had a name for the coconut palm which was well known to them prior to Cook’s arrival.
- Given the close proximity of the far northern part of Queensland to New

Guinea and the coconut laden islands in between and beyond, the 100 days and more nuts can bob around in ocean currents and then germinate, understanding that Far North Queensland is the perfect climate for their survival, it is abundantly obvious that coconut palms have existed along the N.Q. coastline eons before white settlement.

- Although a follower of evolutionary doctrines, Australia’s leading coconut academic “Mike Foale” points out the inevitability of the pre-settlement coconut growth scenario, in his book “Coconut Odyssey” and points out this is a **naturally occurring phenomenon**.



Another favourite argument is **“Oh no, we don’t want to plant coconuts and Hawaiiify the place or the Far North will lose it’s identity”**. In a perverse form of hypocrisy anti-coconut managements have instead opted for a whole raft of non-native, non-naturally occurring palms in an artificial attempt to still give that NQ tropical feel.

In case anyone hasn’t noticed, numerous, non-native imported, post settlement trees and palms flourish in far greater numbers than the persecuted and dwindling coconut palms. Such as those cigar shaped Cuban royal palms. These palms, originally from Mexico, now outnumber coconut palms by **100 to 1** drop fronds on people, and in a cyclone, given their massive trunk diametres are likely to cut a house in half, as against landing on the roof. Difficult to cut down, expensive to maintain and remove. But to be fair, like all of God’s creation, they are a wonderful palm, **in Cuba!** How about the fox tail palm craze, brought

from the inland and out numbering coconut palms by **200 to 1**. Favoured by the “work shy”, due to the low maintenance factor, they are not favoured by wildlife simply because the crowns are too small to provide any serious accommodation with an exposed structure that gives no resting or hiding places.

Are they edible - **No!** Can you drink from their nuts - **No!** Can you weave anything from the fronds - **No!** Do they provide excellent shade - **No!** Do they hold the beaches together - **No!** Do people travel from all over the country to sit under one - **No!** Are they extra resistant to root ball rot in our extra humid tropical climate - **No!** Well what’s the bloody good of them? Trends come and go, but this one has saturated the place and it looks like we’re stuck with it!

So what about these pesky non-naturally occurring, non-native Cuban royal, queen and other palms that dominate the landscape and infringe on native habitats. Nobody says boo about these and others, and comparatively very little is reported about some of the ultra invasive imported trees that pose most serious threats to our biodiversity.

If only the anti-coconut brigades could redirect their illogical passionate angst to the areas it is desperately needed, like eradicating African tulip trees, for example, instead of Cubanizing and Inlandizing the coastal places, ----- **God help us!**



Another long time favourite argument **against** is **“Coconut palms breed rats, mosquitoes and hippies”**.





- Native rats like the whitetail and others are on the decline struggling to survive in ever shrinking habitats. They are an essential part of the food chain, the favourite fare of all birds of prey and snakes for example. They are important to the eco system in a number of ways and this needs to be respected and understood.
- Mosquitoes breed in water catchments, great and small, tyres, takeaway cups, puddles, any indentation in the ground will cause a puddle. When a leaf from a tree falls to the ground and dries out, the sides curl up and this is a potential mosquito breeding site. The list goes on forever. There are far more sound and cost effective ways of minimizing mosquito populations than launching extermination pogroms on one of the states leading assets. Banning coconut palms will not make a dent in the mosquito population, but the tourists will certainly drop off.
- They say coconut palms “breed hippies”...., OK man, you busted us there. It’s pretty pointless denying it. But anyway **99% of these moved down south to Byron Bay about 15 years ago, when the coconuts started running out**, so “what hippy”?, “where’s the hippy”?. Chill your grill about this man, they have already left, most of them anyway.

Yes you guessed it, the arguments against coconut palms are a joke. It’s not funny however when you consider that more than half the jokers on the “anti-coconut brigade” are funded by the tax payer whilst doing incalculable damage to the tourism industry, the environment and our quality of life. **Some of the anti-coconut brigade folk are well meaning but they need to wake up and smell the coffee.**

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These palms landed on the roof during a storm due to severe root ball undercut caused by prolonged excessive use of Round-Up

RIGHT twenty years of sustainable harvesting, 100 foot coconut palms, Club Med, Lindeman Island, Queensland



A tree hugger demonstrates a Cuban Royal Palm girth. Under the same conditions of the above picture this would likely cut the building in half.



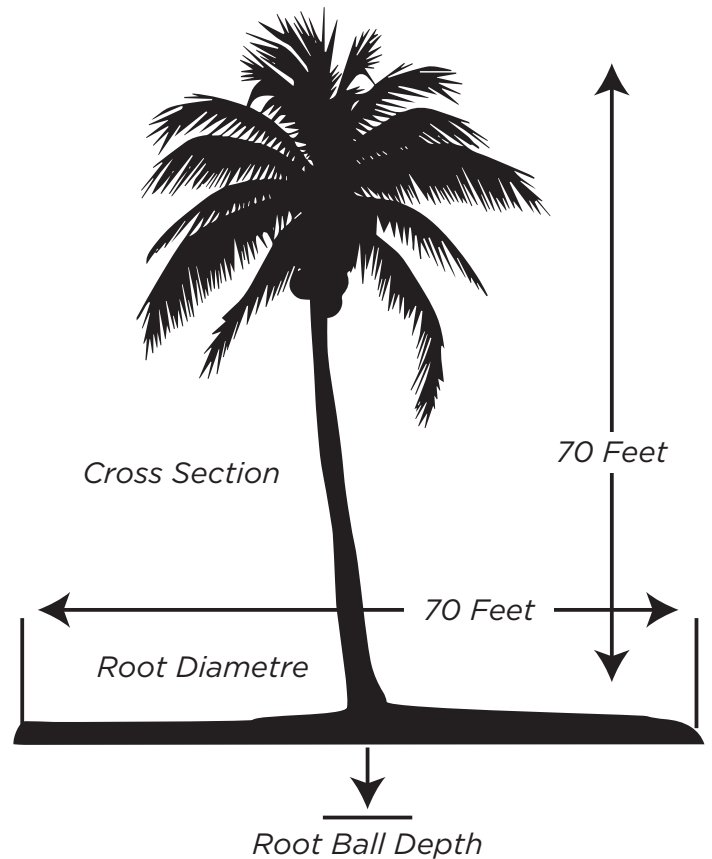
Beach Erosion

It is known and indisputable, *the coconut palm's root system is the most effective natural barrier against beach erosion in the world.*

This lateral root system grows from a substantial root ball and consists of thousands of hardy longitudinal tubular structures that sprout evenly spaced miniature roots at right angles, which themselves sprout miniature roots at right angles and even these sprout miniature nodules, again at right angles. Mathematically in proportion to the overall mass of the above ground structure, coconut palms position more root area in contact with the growing medium than any other tree or palm in the world.

This intelligent design tightly packs sand and growing mediums as roots grow, tangle and compete for space. With no

tap root facility, *the roots extend laterally to a diameter equaling the height of the palm.*



This helps explain their reluctance to blow over during cyclones and their ability in many instances to stop beach erosion in it's tracks.

Understanding that many esplanade plantings are spaced 10 metres or less apart and when planted in rows of 2 or more, root systems share the same common ground as they mesh and tangle together creating a hardy blanketed structure that can withstand severe pounding and is exceptionally quick to repair and re-stabilize.

Not so for most native trees, (calophyllums one side), tap rooted systems simply do not possess the physical means to stabilize sand mediums, survive continued tidal battering or to quickly recover from severe damage.

Time and again, North Queensland coconut palms have proven their worth in helping protect coastal townships. As always on beach fronts healthy palms are the last to blow down, all though many do get taken down by falling native trees

like happened on mass at Midge Point during Cyclone Ului. For example.

Whenever palms come down on beach fronts, whether by cut down, blown down, senility, lightning strike, beach erosion, poisoning or simply gaffed to death by the arborist, regardless of the "modus operandi", beach protection authorities inevitably replace these with native trees. However, in the interest of beach protection and common sense, the opposite needs to happen. ***We don't have a few cyclone free decades for these to establish.***

A dwarf coconut palm will establish in 4 years, a 'common' in 7 and are many times more effective stabilizing beaches. While coconut palms will not be a workable solution in every situation, they are a particularly low cost, invaluable sound investment in the short term, that will provide welcome long term practical protection well into the future, provided they are maintained sustainably and people can restrain themselves from poisoning them.



Mackay Shire Cyclone Debbie beach erosion stopped dead at the root ball

Carbon Lockers

We are all aware of the arguments for and against global warming, yet regardless of the cause, cyclones are more frequent, the summers are getting hotter, forest fires are out of control and ocean levels are inarguably rising. As measurements confirm this is happening at a faster rate than even the doom and gloomers initially predicted.

If the mainstream science we have all been spoon fed is the truth?, then there are realistically and actually only two things mankind can do to influence this predicament...

- 1 Minimize on carbon emissions output
- 2 Maximize on carbon lockup input

Accordingly these are our only options and this must be understood and acted upon at every level.



A large crown "king coconut" at 5 1/2 months growth

The planting of trees is a great way of locking up carbon, but coconut palms are the mother of all carbon lockers. In optimum conditions a large crown super producer can, if fully harvested on a once yearly basis produce up to and exceed 1 ton of growth per annum, including fronds and trunk growth. Pound for

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pound, few if any tree, palm or plant on earth can lock up such staggering amounts of carbon or produce on such a prolific scale and all this in what is considered poor, low nutritional sandy soils or just sand!

Whilst **God's** favourite botanical gift to mankind gives and gives and gives, it takes and takes "carbon from the atmosphere!

The coconut palm doesn't have a season, it produces a bunch of nuts, florescence and fronds every month, all year round. Unless these palms are locked into de-nut programs, they will constantly shed nuts, fronds and other debris and this gets to the bottom of a leading reason why people, particularly the "work shy", detest these palms.



Dwarf at 12 months growth

The "*Cocos nucifera*" is also a magnificent water purifier. These palms love both fresh and salt water and will process as much as they can get their roots on. Indeed, these **air and water purifying, carbon locking, ambiance giving, lifestyle and nutrition providing, beach fortifying, economy boosting, tourist attracting, employment stimulating, wildlife accommodating, life giving marvels**, are everything North Queensland needs. The problem for Queensland is too many chiefs and not enough indians, or in our case, **too many managers and not enough coconuts**.



A small crown Indonesian gold dwarf - 10 months growth

Coconut Nutrition

In the last decade particularly “**Coconut Fever**” has hit main stream society with a bang, as an explosion in understandings of the nutritional and other health benefits sweeps across the globe.

Coconut nutrition truths have been held in check for decades by multi million dollar campaigns of slander, unleashed by industries for commercial gain. The effects of this “**False Witnessing**” on the health of societies are clearly described by the “**People’s Champion**” Dr Bruce Fife, in his book “**The Miracle of Coconut Oil**”.

In recent years, demand has outstripped supply and all the coconut regions of the world are scrambling to keep up with an ever increasing demand. That’s all regions world wide except “North Queensland” who have been moving in the opposite direction. In some towns

one can count the available nut bearing palms on the fingers and toes.

Despite the world wide shortage of coconuts and the premium prices a fresh Queensland nut will bring, ie. \$5 - Cairns, \$7 - Port Douglas up to \$9 in Brisbane and up to \$12 at music festivals, we still don’t have a single serious size commercial plantation in the entire state. Despite optimum growing conditions. The main focus on agriculture in Queensland is sugar, sugar and sugar although some farmers prefer to plant sugar. There is good economic argument that acre for acre coconut plantings will yield higher financial returns than sugar crops, and that acre for acre coconuts can produce more coconut sugar than cane sugar. Coconuts do not require large amounts of pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers. This is good news for the reef and fish stocks. When will someone



take the initiative? Will someone take the initiative?

Meanwhile, there are only enough stock in coconuts in the entire state to keep a small handful of full time coconut vendors employed. Due to the dwindling supplies, the poor old coconut man has to travel further and further afield to acquire enough product to stock his stall. This is causing considerable angst amongst vendors who compete with an

ever increasing demand combined with an ever shrinking resource. The Queensland coconut man is further frustrated when southern arborist poachers increasingly cross the border and raid the dwindling resource to sell at markets and duff duff concerts south of the border. Aside from being a nutrition packed refreshing drink, coconut water is increasingly popular amongst party goers due to it's liver and kidney flush effects.



Cairns coconut man Shawnee Burroughs collecting nuts to feed his family

*"We don't cross the border and launch midnight raids on their pumpkins or whatever it is they grow down there.
"Like what the hell!"*

The health benefits associated with incorporating coconuts into the diet fills volumes, but long story short whilst an apple a day will keep the doctor away, a coconut or 2 a day would near drive them to the brink of extinction.

Reference: Tokelai Island health study 1960's

Coconut Economics

Queensland coconut palms are an economy driver although little if anything is said on the subject. Deloitte's (forensic accountants) have recently released a report which forensically examines the actual dollar value of the "Great Barrier Reef" on the state's economy. This works out to a staggering 54,000,000,000 - 54 billion dollars per annum. We also need to consider and factor in all the coconut variables such as value in civil engineering terms in defending against beach erosion, the tourists they attract, the domestic immigrants they bring, the bolstering effect they have on property rate revenues, particularly on beach front properties, savings to health systems due to people adopting coconuts into their diet, the cottage industries they have founded etc. All things considered, Queensland's thinning coconut populations are also a multi billion dollar asset, although this has never been, fully realized, understood or acted upon.

➤ Tourism

Well it's a long way to drive up from Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Billy the tourist, wife and kids in tow sure as eggs didn't drive all this way to sit under a native tree and drink a can of coke. He just drove past 54,000,000,000 native trees and drank 3 cartons of coke on the way up here. They want to see, experience, touch and taste a real coconut, some for the first time in their lives. Even though they may never return, in the minds eye, they will remember that first coconut experience for the rest of

their lives (if they are lucky enough to find one)...?



Queensland tourism bodies are constantly looking for new ideas to attract visitors in the north, well here's an idea for you guys, instead of putting a picture of one on every second brochure, how about planting or getting behind the promotion of some coconut palms. Plant them and they will come! Instead of sitting on your hands whilst they decline into insignificance. In a final message to tourism bodies, **Queensland coconuts, where the bloody hell are you!**

The refurbishment, reestablishment, promotion and sustainable management of these would do more for tourism than all the campaigns put together at a fraction of the cost.

For tourism, Queensland coconuts are worth well in excess of 1 billion dollars per annum and a large part of the reason tourism industry exists in the first place.

➤ Beach Erosion

When beach erosion becomes too severe, and the esplanades have literally disappeared, the only option left is rock and or concrete walls. These require major foundational structure, skilled design and rock placement. The cost of these structures is huge, up to \$120,000 per beach front residence and in order to get the heavy machinery in it is usually necessary to remove the remaining established native trees. Actually hindsight is a wonderful thing, if the initiative to plant 3-4-5 rows of coconut palms a few decades ago was taken, then burdensome costs could have been avoided. Although not a workable format in every situation, in most areas they are a cost effective and workable solution. Particularly as areas can be planted out for a small fraction of the cost of rock walls. Although seriously under utilized, the areas where plantings are doing their job, represent multi-million dollar assets and savings.



*Coconuts = Esplanade
No Coconuts = No Esplanade*

Unbelievably and incredibly, anti coconut bodies of all persuasions are to this day removing, banning and resisting the planting of, poisoning and prematurely gaffing to death palms to the severe detriment of entire beach communities, particularly those who live along the esplanades.

➤ Real Estate

The dollar value coconut palms add to real estate in beach suburbs is truly amazing. It is no coincidence that the areas with the most coconut palms are consistently and by far the most valuable real estate. Just take a look at aptly named “Palm Cove” - “Cairns Shire” or “Port Douglas” - “Douglas Shire” or “Slade Point” - “Mackay Shire”. The larger the coconut population, the higher the price of real estate and associated prestige.



Increased property values

The larger than life house prices in the higher coconut populated areas, flow on through substantially enhanced occupancy rate revenues, helping to bolster council and private enterprise budgets. **Managers need to understand the value of these influences.** The added values, even small coconut populations bring to North Queensland communities again is on a multi million dollar scale.

➤ Shaded Structures

With the highest skin cancer rates in the world, our Slip Slop Slap society cannot overestimate the value of shaded structures in public areas. A coconut crown (provided it is not over lopped by operators seeking to take a short cut on the next harvest run) provides superb

shade that in surface area would dwarf any beach umbrella. To provide a man made shaded structure on this scale is a major expense, that requires ongoing expense in maintenance costs to fend off rust and coating deteriorations, particularly in the salt air and abrasive sand environments of beach esplanades.



Far more beautiful than a man made shade structure & a fraction of the cost

One only has to visit the Townsville Strand to see how valuable palms are in this application. Especially as they don't deteriorate, require painting and are close to cyclone proof, in which case they are self-healing anyway. The cost of planting and maintenance of coconut palms pales into insignificance when compared to the construction, cost and maintenance of man made shaded structures.



When will the values of coconut palms in our communities be understood, will they be understood? Yes it's true some native trees also provide excellent shade such as the beach almond and these also attract wildlife such as those wonderful "though messy" black cockatoos. These wonderful trees and others should also be planted along beach fronts (behind the coconut palms).



Yet another favourite argument against coconut palms is they are **too expensive to maintain and must be culled and replaced with native trees.**

We often hear councils complaining about the high cost of coconut de-nut programs, as though it was a major drain on council budgets. This is fake news at it's best as the exact opposite is the case. Coconut palms in fact have a substantial effect on pouring revenues into council budgets on a number of fronts.

Firstly the cutting down of coconuts and replanting and maintenance of native trees is hardly a cost free exercise, as the countries billion dollar + arboricultural industry confirms.

Understanding the value of the coconut asset, the actual cost of maintaining less than 15,000 coconut palms state wide is so puny by comparison as to be wholly insignificant. Even if there were 15,000 palms on de-nut programs, which there aren't and even if it cost \$200 per year to harvest, which it doesn't $15,000 \times \$200 = \$3,000,000$ per annum to maintain a multi billion dollar asset, (first time in history).

Dollar for dollar the coconut investment yields higher dividends in fact than any other investment in the history of the north. One has to be disconcerting and thrifty with the public purse, however moaning about the paltry cost of public safety maintenance programs is diversional, illogical and unjustifiable.



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Eimeo Beach, Mackay, Queensland



Harvest Standards

Since 1999 harvest standards across the North have improved, although there is still the full spectrum of work standards on display depending on the council, resort or island managers competence and eye for aesthetics and safety. The range starts at poor and moves through to superb with some areas arguably sporting the best workmanship in the “urban coconut management world”. In previous decades, before the WH&S take over, a menagerie of harvest techniques were utilised by managers and these included...

➤ De-nutting with Cherry Pickers (EWP's)

This slow process can be many times more expensive than climbing and work standards can suffer, as the operator does not have unrestricted 360° access to crowns and often there is no access for this expensive carbon emitting machinery to begin with.



To be fair however, some caring professionals do produce first class results operating in E.W.P.'s.

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➤ Fitting Coconets

Intended to catch coconuts, this fully plastic construction which will no doubt win first prize on the “World’s Stupidest Inventions Show”, still required a cherry picker for harvesting. Fortunately for public safety, aesthetics and the environment this dangerous apparatus has gone extinct in Queensland, thank goodness.



➤ Barefoot Climbing

Even on the Pacific Islands, it is extremely rare to locate a proficient barefoot coconut climber these days and the X-Box generation are simply not interested in pushing themselves that hard. WH&S Queensland would not allow this practice to continue in any case.



*“Coconut Man” Hurse Cutler
Breaking all the rules*

➤ Climbing Irons

The use of climbing irons has for 100 years plus proven to be the most efficient and economical way to harvest coconut palms. Far safer and more productive than barefoot or cherry picker techniques and the caring operator can produce a stunning aesthetic result. This is due to the ability of operators to locate themselves in the optimum locked in position for every cut, every time.



Although covering a substantial sized area for a coconut growing region, North Queensland has the smallest coconut populations in the world by far. As a result of their sparsity, this precious asset is treated by the serious professional with “great reverence”, as against being taken for granted due to their proliferation.

This reverence mind set has spanned a range of harvest innovations that raise the bar worldwide in the “Urban Palm Management Industry” and clearly set this trade apart from the arboriculture field. These innovations include world class harvest standards, the world’s first coconut non-climbing descent, system of procedures originated in Cairns in 1987 and the world’s only “sustainable climbing irons” for use in palms, poles and trees. This highly advanced technology was trialled over a 28 year period in Queensland, the USA and Britain. This breakthrough tool is manufactured in Cairns and was released in 2016.



For the last 30 years FNQ coconut managers have had a choice in engaging 2 distinct types of harvest technologies.

- A. THE SUSTAINABLE
- B. THE UNSUSTAINABLE

There are no prizes for guessing which method “anti-coconut brigade” managements have adopted.



Coconut Unsustainability

Understanding the immense commercial value of Queensland's tiny coconut populations and the all important quality of life factors they bring to communities, how then are managements looking after, or "tending to" these remaining, priceless **God** given assets?

Of all the challenges facing Queensland's shrinking coconut populations, **"gaff damage" is by far the single most serious threat to their survival**. The ongoing use of this arborist tool is already in many areas nudging them to the brink of extinction.

There are substantial and powerful forces aligned against Queensland

coconut palms and to date many battles have been lost. The **"pro-coconut brigade"** however will not concede, defeat, despite ridicule, derision, threats and slander, we will not lay down our arms, "or rather - pens". We will fight for coconuts on the beaches, we will fight for them in the streets, the parks, wild areas and the backyard and we will never surrender. Once more into the lion's mouth I say, so "steel yourselves" as we battle the demons of unsustainability and examine the appalling condition in most shires of the ever shrinking remanent of "Queensland's often intentionally mismanaged coconut populations".

After only 10 years de-nutting in traditional irons, palms can have a questionable structural integrity and an appalling visual effect



When traditional arborist climbing irons are used for harvesting palms, the large single gaff penetrates a substantial distance into trunk tissue in order to support the weight of the operator. Because this basic tool has no facility for gaff removal, operators must move the leg forward to effect gaff disengagement. This action substantially increases the size of an already large hole and leaves a permanent water catchment zone. These cavities grow exponentially over time and this can cause the premature demise of palms.

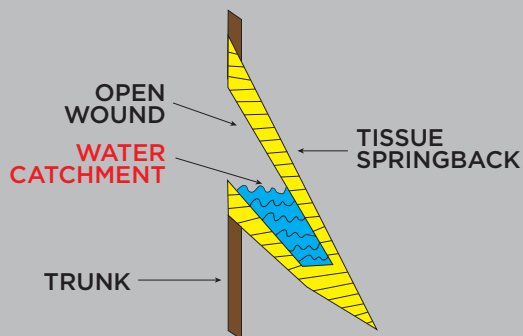


After 15 years de-nutting with traditional irons

Arborist Leg Irons



Old System



Open Wound



Typical example de-nutted approx. 20 times over 10 years.

All North Queensland coconut managers have for well over a quarter of a century and to this day have access to both sustainable and unsustainable coconut harvest options. Disappointingly although unsurprisingly, management teams with a demonic vent against coconut palms along with those who simply couldn't care less have chosen the unsustainable option. Thereby effectively culling palms and ultimately ensuring the avoidable premature demise of entire populations.

With a modified strategy that would do "Pontius Pilate" proud, anti coco managers have pretended year in year out that Queensland manufactured and proven sustainable alternatives don't exist. They have simply allowed arborists to deliver the death sentence on their behalf. These managers can wash their hands all they like but the **gaff cavities**, **water logged trunks** and **root ball rot** leads right up to their doors.

In order for managers to employ known, proven unsustainable arborist leg irons on palms, it is necessary for them to...

- turn a blind eye to aesthetics
- turn a blind eye to palm health
- turn a blind eye to operator safety
- turn a blind eye to root ball rot
- turn a blind eye to gaff damage, trunk rot and public safety.

They should have gone to "Spec Savers"







Coconut Unsustainability

The actual on display evidences between deploying “unsustainable climbing irons” as against “sustainable climbing irons” cannot be ignored, discounted, denied or swept under the carpet **(on this occasion)**. North Queensland has in fact entire shires with thousands of palms in public areas, standing in solemn silent testimony to the differences between the two systems.

UNSUSTAINABLE irons showing fresh cut out wounds after 10 years

Coconut Sustainability

Anzac Park, Townsville



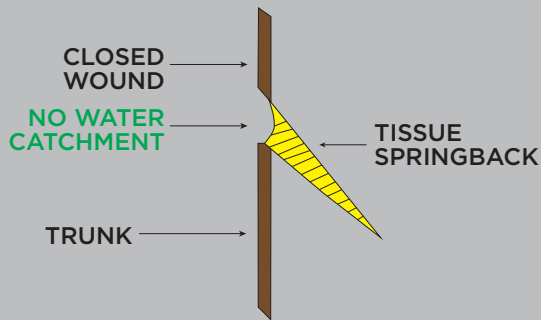
SUSTAINABLE irons Townsville Shire after 25 years de-nutting



Hurse Irons



New System



Closed Wound



Typical examples de-nutted approx. 50 times over 25 years with Hurse Irons & twice with arborist irons

Most thankfully for Queensland, not all parks and garden management teams are anti-coconut. They may not be pro-coconut either but the point is they conduct their duties “in tending to the garden” without prejudice Each one of **God’s** botanic gifts is treated with the same level of respect and reverence, despite personal opinions. This welcomed mindset is of course the hallmark of professionalism.

After careful scrutiny of arborist and Hurse Iron gaff damage comparisons, both the Townsville and Mackay shires adopted the sustainable technology 25 and 21 years ago as these harvest works became part of the Hurse Iron R&D trial process.



It costs councils and other management bodies nothing to ensure the sustainable harvest option. Some councils have provided long term protection for their assets by writing the sustainable option into contractual obligations.

Life or death of entire populations at the stake of a pen and with zero cost to the customer. After 30 years demonstration of the sustainable coconut harvest option, a staggering 70% of shires still utilize the unsustainable arborist tool option!



Climbing in the New System



After a mammoth 28 year research and development process, a Queensland manufacturer has finally come up with the workable, practical and economic solution by producing a high quality tool, that in operation keeps trunk tissue disruptions to an absolute minimum. This green way design does not leave large permanent water catchments, remove timber shards or water log trunks.



In addition to the sustainable and environmental benefits, the new tool brings a series of breakthroughs in operator safety, productivity, comfort, maneuverability, stability and ergonomic function. This hand crafted precision tool is built to last from the highest quality materials.



Coconut Liabilities



The final argument in the “anti-coconut brigades” arsenal is that **coconuts can kill, maim and damage property and therefore to improve safety this liability must be removed at every opportunity.**

- Coconut palms in areas of high pedestrian traffic such as pathways, parks, resorts and esplanades etc. do require servicing in the form of de-nutting operations. Correctly maintained by a coconut specialist, even in the heaviest pedestrian areas, these palms are especially and predictably safe. Professional harvest techniques ensure they will not shed projectiles during harvest intervals and the same predictabilities can not be matched by any native tree. Having said this, that is assuming that sustainable harvest equipment and methods are employed.

When unsustainable methods are used on palms over time, a range of work health, safety and environmental liability issues are unnecessarily generated.

➤ Root Ball Rot

Any tree or palm in the world can potentially succumb to root ball rot, without mankind’s assistance, however when 100’s or 1,000’s of large gaff wounds are inflicted in palm trunks, these water catchments substantially encourage trunk water logging. This in turn encourages root ball rot and this condition can cause palms or trees to

keel over instantly without warning. This surface and below ground condition often goes unnoticed and only becomes evident after a structure has fallen. There have been 2 innocent lives lost in FNQ in recent times due this condition. It is the managers responsibility to reduce these risks at every opportunity and the first step in the process would be to stop allowing the said damaging apparatus to be deployed on the trees and palms under their care. It is also the responsibility of the arborist contractors not to use unsustainable, shard discarding, trunk water logging, root ball rot promoting equipment for maintenance procedures.



Typical Water Logged Trunk

➤ Structural Integrity

Often large open gaff wounds cause permanent water catchments and these are a magnet for bacterial and fungal activities. This in turn causes otherwise healthy trunk tissues to rot. Once a rot cavity starts growing it can often culminate in undermining the structural integrity of trunks. These trunks are required to support immense weights and provide substantial flexibility. Aside from being a literal fist in the eye, the gaff damage issue is the single most serious public safety, climber safety, palm health and survival issue facing Queensland’s spartan coconut populations.



A Shire using arborist irons

Coconut Wildlife

The world is currently experiencing the largest “mass extinction crisis” in the history of mankind. Although there is an avalanche of issues contributing to this, “as we are all aware”, the leading cause is “shrinking habitats”. Sadly and ashamedly for us, in relation to wildlife and habitat loss, Australia is a world leader and in record time.

Conservation bodies continue to provide innovations in an attempt to slow, offset and provide alternative accommodations for our dwindling wildlife. Many of these works involve considerable time expense and resources and wildlife and conservation agencies are struggling with serious deficits in funding and resource availabilities. Although there have been some spectacular and wonderful results in some areas despite

their best and noble effects, overall we are still going backwards at considerable speed.

Wildlife and other conservation managements need to open their eyes to the monumental role that coconut palms can play in providing spectacular food source and habitat accommodations to an immensely wide variety of native animals, birds, reptiles and insects.

They don't only breed native rats and hippies, in fact there are not enough pages in this report to fully catalogue all of **God's** creatures that thrive in the coconut palm environment all year round. Most native trees flower once yearly and unlike other palms, the coconut flowers 12 times a year which is why after cyclones have been through, fruit bats, birds, bees, possums, sugar gliders etc etc seek refuge and sustenance in the coconut palm, because they are the first to put out a inflorescence and provide nutrition. This is not to mention of course that almost every part of the coconut palm is edible.



Compared to other palms and most native trees, the actual habitat accommodation facilities that coconut palms provide are exceptional. This is because the wide frond base, where they attach to the crown, provide numerous independent platform structures, shaded from the sun, suitable for nest building, possum sleeping etc. These areas funnel the decaying floret particles and other matter which forms rich compost on the bottom half of the crown creating moist UV filtered niche environments, perfect for numerous varieties of insects such as centipedes, beetles, witchetty grubs, cockroaches etc. These moist environments are the perfect protected and preferred habitat for green frogs who have a smorgasbord laid on. This in turn attracts bird life, geckos, monitor lizards and snakes who move in on the rats and so on. No palm or tree on earth is as capable of providing such a wide cross section of life and abundance and in Queensland more misunderstood, under valued and under utilized.

Every time the “anti-coconut brigade” proponents remove a coconut palm, they remove vital habitat, food source and wildlife, when planted the opposite happens. In Queensland if you stand for

the coconut palm, you stand for wildlife. **This ever giving miracle “tree of life” needs major replanting now!**

Conclusion

The same habitat loss facing wildlife has impacted many pockets of isolated producing palms as suburbs and townships expand. This has also played a large roll in reducing numbers. Because the decline has been incremental, over time, often it has not registered on parks management radars. With no governing body and the vast distances the asset is thinly spread, managements are compartmentalized in relation to the overall picture, with each one doing what is right in their own eyes. **It is hoped this document will help turn the tide on the status and decline of Queensland coconuts by highlighting sustainable harvest practices and showcasing the multi-layered physical, psychological, environmental and financial values this heaven sent gift brings North Queenslanders.**

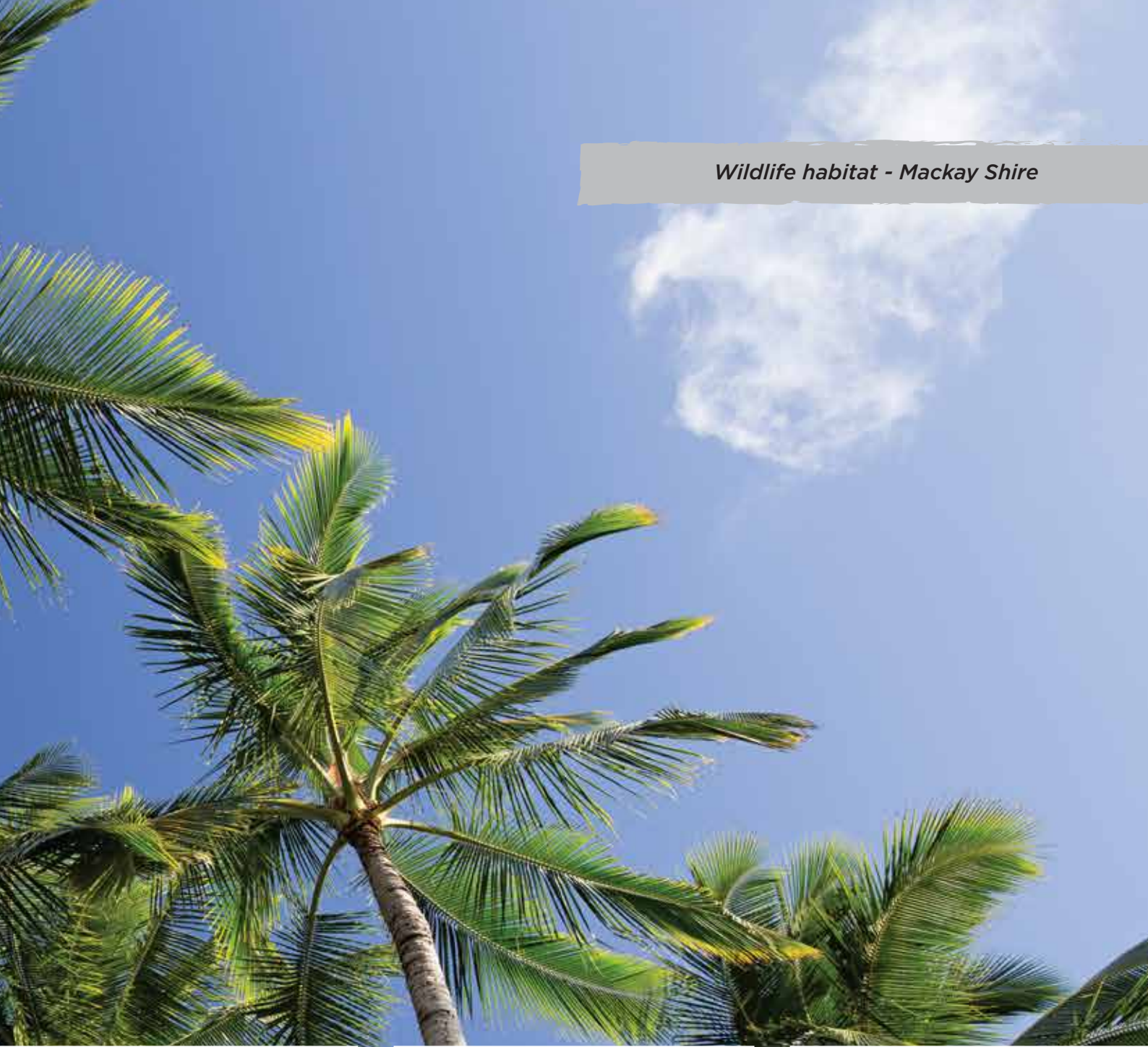
Thankyou for your time and consideration in reading this report.



This document is provided by Queensland’s leading and longest serving urban palm management professional, Hurse Cutler of Last Day Warriors, Cairns, FNQ.



Wildlife habitat - Mackay Shire



Rowes Bay, Townsville

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