Home Hill State High School and TNQ Drought Hub Educational Partnership

Case Study – Version 1

TNQ Drought Hub



tnqdroughthub.com.au

Australian Government
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Future Drought Fund
James Cook University Australia
TNQ Drought Hub
Cape York Natural Resource Management
fba
Gulf Savannah NRM
NQ Dry Tropics
Reef Catchments
Southern Gulf NRM

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Building Workforce Capacity Through Practical Agricultural Education

The Tropical North Queensland Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub (TNQ Drought Hub) and Home Hill State High School are working together to strengthen the future agricultural workforce by providing students with practical, industry-relevant learning experiences. Through the Hub's Building Human Capacity Program, students gain hands-on experience in modern horticultural production while developing the skills, confidence and industry awareness needed for future careers in agriculture.

At the centre of the partnership is the school's Agricultural Precinct and Protected Cropping Structure, which provides an authentic training environment that mirrors commercial horticultural operations. Students undertaking a Certificate II in Production Horticulture develop practical skills in planting, crop establishment, irrigation management, plant health assessment, crop monitoring and harvesting.



Image 1 Home Hill State High School Agricultural Precinct and Cravo Protective Cropping Structure



Image 1 Home Hill State High School students getting out of the classroom

Agricultural Science Teacher Louise Nicholas emphasizes the value of exposing students to contemporary farming systems and the diverse career opportunities available across the agricultural sector. By linking classroom learning with real-

world practice, students gain a stronger understanding of the technology, innovation and sustainability principles that underpin modern agriculture.

The impact of the initiative extends beyond Home Hill State High School. The Agricultural Precinct is increasingly serving as a regional training hub, providing opportunities for students from neighbouring schools, including Ayr and Bowen State High Schools, to engage with horticultural education and explore agricultural career pathways.

Students also develop an appreciation of sustainable land management through activities with organisations such as the Lower Burdekin Landcare Association, strengthening their understanding of biodiversity, environmental stewardship and resilient farming systems.

Outcomes

Through partnership, students have:

- Developed practical horticultural and agricultural skills.
- Increased awareness of agricultural career opportunities.
- Experienced industry-standard production systems.
- Strengthened their understanding of sustainable farming practices.
- Built confidence to pursue further education, training and employment in agriculture.

Impact

The partnership demonstrates how place-based education and industry collaboration can help address regional workforce challenges. By connecting

students with contemporary agricultural practice and clear career pathways, the initiative is contributing to a skilled, informed and resilient future workforce for northern Australia.

Student Success Stories



Image 2 and 4 Students gain an understanding of sustainable farming practices

Building Skills Through Hands-On Learning

Students undertaking the Certificate II in Production Horticulture have gained practical experience in commercial-style growing environments, developing skills in irrigation management, crop establishment, plant health assessment and harvesting. Many students who initially had limited exposure to agricultural production have grown in confidence through regular participation in the Agricultural Precinct, applying classroom knowledge to real production systems.

Discovering Agricultural Career Pathways

For some students, participation in the program has opened their eyes to the diversity of careers available in agriculture. Exposure to modern production systems, new technologies and industry engagement opportunities has helped

students recognise that agriculture offers pathways beyond traditional farming, including horticulture, agribusiness, environmental management, research and agricultural technology.

Developing Confidence and Leadership

Students involved in the Agricultural Precinct have taken increasing responsibility for crop production activities, monitoring plant growth, managing irrigation systems and contributing to harvest operations. These experiences have helped build confidence, teamwork and problem-solving skills while encouraging students to take ownership of production outcomes.

Inspiring Further Education and Employment

The practical nature of the program has helped students make informed decisions about future study and employment. Through direct exposure to industry-standard production systems and agricultural workplaces, students have developed the skills and confidence needed to pursue further training, tertiary education or employment within the agricultural sector.



Image 5 Students are learning about the diversity of careers available in agriculture

Learning Beyond the Classroom

Participation in activities with organisations such as the Lower Burdekin Landcare Association has broadened students' understanding of the relationship between productive agriculture and environmental stewardship. Students have gained a greater appreciation of biodiversity, sustainable land management and the importance of building resilient agricultural systems for the future.





Image 6 and 7 Crops growing throughout the precinct

Teacher Perspective

Agricultural Science Teacher Louise Nicholas has observed increased student engagement as learners connect theory with practical application. The opportunity to work within a modern horticultural production environment helps students see the relevance of their studies while developing skills valued by industry. The program is helping students build both technical capability and confidence in pursuing agricultural career pathways. These stories reinforce the partnership's broader goal of creating a skilled pipeline of future agricultural professionals while strengthening workforce capacity across the Burdekin region and northern Australia.



Image 8 The precinct also hosts agricultural field days and workshops