



BULLARASTATION.COM.AU

BULLARA STATION CASE STUDY

Bullara Station, which the Shallcross family have owned since the late 1950s, is a sprawling pastoral property located between Coral Bay and Exmouth, in Western Australia. Historically, Bullara is known for its cattle farming operation, however, in recent years, the station has successfully pivoted to integrate agri-tourism into its business model. This case study summary shares Tim and Edwina's experience preparing for drought.



THE BULLARA STORY

In the early 2000's, Ningaloo reef was becoming a popular travel destination and was recognized world-wide. Whale Sharks were not as popular then, and Exmouth was not a world heritage area, however, Tim and Edwina Shallcross saw an opportunity for nature-based tourism. They started with 6 campsites and then renovated the old shearers' quarters in 2008. In 2010 they started to invest more time and energy into the nature-based tourism dream. This came about by the live export ban, which was the catalyst to go in the new direction.

Bullara have started a small Pasture Fed Cattle Assurance System accredited beef supply chain. Cattle are trucked south and grown out to production weight, packaged to retail ready and freighted back to sell through the shop and restaurant on the property. This Paddock to Plate concept is very popular with the guests who can taste the local beef, but also provides a value-add product to the business. This has again diversified the business, so that when there is another drought, they can rely on another source of income.

Being in a semi-arid region, Western Australia's northwest coast, including the Exmouth region, often grapples with water shortages. For a cattle farming operation such as Bullara, water is an indispensable resource, and its scarcity impacts livestock and the overall business. Pastoral properties mostly have rainwater tanks for drinking water, but with climate change and bigger extremes, the drinking water must be pulled from suitable bores. These bores are also decreasing in quality and quantity due to reduced recharge capacity.

With increasing visitors and daily farming operations, Bullara's existing water resources were under pressure. The station needed solutions that would not only address the immediate water shortage but also ensure sustainable water use in the long run.





BULLARA STATION WATER MANAGEMENT PROJECT

RDA Pilbara were approached by the Shallcross family regarding assistance with funding to assist them to build water security and quality on their property. Currently, the only station homesteads with reverse osmosis water plants are mining owned. The restricting factor for pastoralists being the capital cost of the treatment plant, as pastoral stations have a relatively low cash flow compared to civil and mining type businesses (i.e. pastoral stations owned by the mining companies).

Stage one of the project, to install a modulated water treatment plant, has created the backbone for a future plan to adapt a wastewater plant suitable for irrigating pastures. Stage two is a long-term direction aiding drought-proofing whilst creating additional jobs required and new skills in pasture, livestock management, rotation and husbandry.

Onsite works commenced in early 2023, with the pad and footing installation, 100m underground power line, plumbing connections and additional supply and feed tanks and installation of the wastewater bio pond completed by May 2023. This also included earth works and pond liner installation along with plumbing.

At Bullara, the following water solutions have been implemented:

1. Bullara invested in rainwater harvesting systems, capturing and storing rainwater during wet periods. This water is then used during drier months for the station and guests. Further investment has been made in pipeline upgrades and pumping systems from bore field to get more volume for the homestead RO and livestock.
2. As part of the agri-tourism experience, Bullara has initiated programs to educate guests on the importance of water conservation and the essential requirements of livestock.
3. In periods of extreme water scarcity, livestock numbers were strategically reduced to align with available water and feed resources.
4. Implementing a modulated water treatment plant to improve water quality.



FIELD DAY

A field day was held on Tuesday 17th October 2023. Over 9 surrounding pastoral stations, RDA Pilbara and other invited guests were invited. However, due to extreme weather conditions on the day, several stations were unable to attend at the last minute. Tim Shallcross was able to showcase what has been completed to date with the ponds and on-site works. Due to the delay of components coming from the USA, the reverse osmosis water treatment plant had not yet been delivered and installed, however, Tim was able to show diagrams and advise how the plant will work, and how it will integrate with stage 2.

OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

The combined initiatives have enabled Bullara to significantly reduce its freshwater consumption, ensuring a more sustainable water footprint. By integrating water conservation into the guest experience, visitors leave with increased awareness about water challenges and the importance of conservation.



CONCLUSION

Bullara Station's holistic approach to water management underscores the importance of proactive strategies in addressing environmental challenges. By combining infrastructure investments with educational initiatives, Bullara serves as a demonstration site for other pastoral stations grappling with water scarcity and quality. By addressing water management proactively, Bullara has bolstered its resilience against drought and water shortages.



Postal - 1 Burkett Road, Carnarvon WA 6701
Phone: 08 9942 5935
Email: bullara@activ8.net.au

www.bullarastation.com.au