**Chemical-free weeding to restore Coochiemudlo Island’s Melaleuca Wetlands**

Healthy Land and Water, Coochiemudlo Island Coastcare and Redland City Council will be working together over the next four years to control weeds within the Coochiemudlo Island Melaleuca Wetlands, as part of the Healthy Land and Water Moreton Bay Ramsar Wetland Project.

The Coochiemudlo Island Wetland Weed Control Project - *Protecting Threatened Species and Restoring Ramsar values,* was launched on Saturday 1st February with a working bee in the Melaleuca Wetlands, in celebration of World Wetlands Day. World Wetlands Day celebrates wetlands listed under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention) which includes the Moreton Bay Ramsar Wetland.

The Coochiemudlo Island Project will employ innovative chemical-free weeding techniques including saturated steam and hand removal methods to remove a range of weeds from the wetlands. Avoiding the use of chemicals prevents them from leaching through the sandy soils of the Island and subsequently into the groundwater and Moreton Bay. Weeds that will be targeted through this initiative include Singapore daisy, cocos palms, fishbone fern, asparagus fern, cassia, pepper and umbrella trees.

The project will help to reduce threats and restore habitat in and around the 19-hectare freshwater wetlands, which forms part of the Moreton Bay Ramsar site. The wetlands are of high cultural and ecological value and are home to more than 170 recorded native plant species including endangered orchids and fungi. The wetlands also provide habitat to more than 100 bird species, native animals and invertebrates.

“Healthy Land and Water is proud to support a project that endeavours to improve the health of the Melaleuca Wetlands and subsequently the Moreton Bay Ramsar Wetland. Wetlands play an important role in providing habitat, protecting our shores from erosion, absorbing pollutants and improving water quality,” said Julie McLellan, CEO of Healthy Land and Water.

Melaleuca wetland ecosystems have been diminished in south-east Queensland as a result of land clearing and coastal development pressures. The preservation of these wetlands are important not only for the ecosystem services it provides to the Island and the Moreton Bay Ramsar Wetland, but also as a remnant of this vegetation type in the region.

“The Australian Government is pleased to be able to support a project that applies a chemical free weeding approach to these delicate and ecologically diverse Melaleuca Wetlands and that helps improve the Moreton Bay Ramsar Wetland,” said Andrew Laming, Federal Member for Bowman.

According to the Deputy Mayor of Redland City Council and local divisional Councillor, Lance

Hewlett, “it is encouraging to see how Natural Resource Management organisations, local government, community groups and volunteers can work together to make a significant impact to help restore and protect the natural environment,” he said.

Kim Richards, Member of Parliament for Redland, said it is encouraging to see how dedicated volunteers are in their efforts to protect the wetlands and. “The partnerships forged by Coastcare, Healthy Land and Water, and all levels of government will ensure we work together to protect and preserve the unique coastal environments of Coochiemudlo Island,” she said.

Coochiemudlo Island Coastcare has been caring for the Island’s environment since 2013 and its 175 members are passionate about undertaking ecosystem protection and restoration activities without the use of chemicals. If you would like to help them rehabilitate the Island’s coastal environment and wetlands, please contact Coastcare on coochiecoastcare@gmail.com.

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**To arrange interviews or for more information:** Helené Bam, Marketing & Communications Coordinator, Healthy Land and Water, 07 3177 9130

**About Healthy Land and Water**

Healthy Land and Water delivers innovative and science-based solutions to environmental challenges in South East Queensland. With expertise in environmental research, monitoring, training and evaluation, we work to make South East Queensland clean, green and healthy.