MEDIA RELEASE

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Environmental Achievements Awarded the Iconic Sarus Crane Award

The commendable environmental contributions made by individuals and groups throughout the Southern Gulf region have been acknowledged through the prestigious Sarus Crane Award during local Australia Day Ceremonies.

Since 2007, this award has been bestowed upon deserving nominees who have played a pivotal role in preserving the natural assets or cultural heritage of the region. In the current year, the awards were presented through a collaboration between Local Governments and Southern Gulf NRM. The 2024 recipients of the Sarus Crane Award include Flinders Canine Obedience and Agility Club (Flinders), Richmond State School (Richmond), Duncan Fysh (McKinlay), and Sundowners Kalkutungu Dancers (Mount Isa).

Pru Wharton, Interim Operations Manager of Southern Gulf NRM, said, *"The Sarus Crane Awards recognise and celebrate individuals and groups making a significant contribution to the fields of land management, environmental and conservation. The awards give people and organisations across our region the opportunity to recognise individuals and groups that have achieved something special within our communities."*

The accomplishments of this year's awardees span a diverse spectrum of conservation initiatives. The Sundowners Kalkutungu Dancers from Mount Isa earned recognition for their outstanding cultural heritage and artistic prowess, showcased through a captivating performance at DanceRite 2023 held at the prestigious Sydney Opera House. Meanwhile, the Flinders Canine Obedience and Agility Club, hailing from Hughenden, made a significant impact by volunteering for the Southern Gulf NRM's Litter Project in June 2023. Their dedicated efforts led to the collection of over 60 kilograms of litter from the environment, contributing substantially to the initiative's success.

The students at Richmond State School demonstrated their commitment to sustainability through a flourishing school garden. Cultivating an impressive array of herbs and other plants, they not only provided this fresh produce to school families but also sold them through their local SPAR, showcasing a commendable integration of education and community involvement. In Julia Creek, the award has been posthumously awarded to Duncan Fysh, a dedicated McKinlay Shire resident committed to land management, conservation, and cultural preservation. He actively protected the environment, contributed to Julia Creek Dunnart research, and propagated native trees using recycled materials.

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His legacy includes thousands of mature trees, showcasing a lasting positive impact on the Shire's environment.

Cloncurry residents, John & Tommy Senden have been nominated for the award for their love of the natural environment. Their garden is a collection of natural elements with a strong theme highlighting the history of the region and the diverse landscapes, and they can also often be found together in and around the Cloncurry River, cleaning up rubbish and eradicating weeds. They happily volunteer their time in order to protect and present the river in its best possible form.

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More information on the award and 2024 recipients is attached.
Images provided on request.

SARUS CRANE AWARD

Background to the Sarus Crane Award

Since 2007, Southern Gulf NRM has proudly recognised individuals and groups making a significant contribution to land management, cultural heritage, and the environment by means of the well regarded Sarus Crane Award. That award was announced at the Annual General Meeting of Southern Gulf NRM (then known as Southern Gulf Catchments). From 2016, Southern Gulf NRM offered partnerships with local councils in our region to offer the Sarus Crane Award as part of Australia Day Award ceremonies. The objective is to enable wider recognition of achievement across all shires in the Southern Gulf region.

Story of the Sarus Crane Award's name

The iconic Sarus Crane *(Grus antigone)*, which features in the organisation's logo, was picked as the award's name in 2007. The Sarus Crane is the tallest flying bird in the world, with some adult males reaching up to 1.8 metres tall. The only known breeding area for Australian Sarus Cranes is in the Southern Gulf of Carpentaria. This area is important not only for native flora and fauna species that call this region

home but also for the numerous migratory bird species that travel vast distances along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway to reach these feeding grounds. This bird signifies the distinct environmental values of the Southern Gulf region and its importance at local and international scales.

About Southern Gulf NRM

Southern Gulf NRM is the natural resource management (NRM) organisation for the Southern Gulf region of North West Queensland. The region comprises all the land whose creeks and rivers run into the south of the Gulf of Carpentaria. We work with our partners and the community to protect our region's natural resources and maintain the prosperity of industries and communities that rely on these.

2024 SARUS CRANE AWARD RECIPIENTS

Flinders Shire Council – Flinders Canine Obedience and Agility Club

The Flinders Canine Obedience and Agility Club is a nonprofit organisation that is passionately driven by local dog enthusiasts. Demonstrating their dedication to community and environmental stewardship, the club generously volunteered their time for Southern Gulf NRM's Litter Project on June 17th & 18th 2023. Tasked with collecting litter from roadside locations outside of Hughenden, the club's efforts yielded an impressive result, removing over 60kgs of litter from our surroundings.

Richmond Shire Council – Richmond State School

Founded in 1889, Richmond State School stands as a co-educational institution that provides a diverse array of learning opportunities for students from Prep to Year 10. Remarkably, the students at Richmond State School have cultivated a flourishing assortment of herbs and other plants. These botanical wonders not only benefit the school families, but also find their way to local homes through sales at the nearby SPAR Supermarket.

McKinlay Shire Council – Duncan Fysh

Duncan Fysh was a dedicated McKinlay Shire resident known for his commitment to land management, conservation, and cultural preservation. He actively managed Proa Station to protect the environment from weeds and pests and played a key role in the research on the Julia Creek Dunnart alongside Dr. Pat Wooley from Latrobe University. This led to many years of continued research into the animal, which has culminated in the Julia Creek Visitor Information Centre having a display dedicated to the Dunnarts including live animals on site that attracts thousands of visitors each year. After retiring, Duncan moved into town and continued his environmental efforts by propagating native trees, using recycled materials for sustainable growth. His legacy includes thousands of mature trees across the Shire, showcasing his lasting positive impact on the environment. Duncan Fysh, an old-school gentleman, pioneered carbon credits well before their fruition, leaving a profound environmental legacy in McKinlay Shire.

Mount Isa City Council – Sundowners Kalkutungu Dancers

This group has devoted themselves to mastering the traditional dance of their ancestors, demonstrating an unwavering commitment to both preserving and sharing their rich cultural heritage with the younger generation. Their dedication and talent were prominently showcased on a national platform at DanceRite

2023, an esteemed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dance competition held at the iconic Sydney Opera House on 25th & 26th November 2023. Earning a well-deserved spot among the Top 8 out of 22 competing groups, the group's performance not only highlighted their exceptional skills, but also contributed significantly to the promotion and appreciation of their cultural legacy on a broader scale.

Cloncurry Shire Council – John & Tommy Senden

John and Tommy embody the essence of "quiet achievers," exemplifying their commitment to a shared passion for the natural environment. Their collective dedication is unmistakably evident in John and Tommy's Garden, a captivating assortment of natural elements designed with a compelling theme that eloquently narrates the region's history and showcases its diverse landscapes. Together, they frequently engage in environmental stewardship along the Cloncurry River, diligently clearing debris and eradicating weeds. Their selfless volunteer efforts reflect a genuine desire to preserve and enhance the river's beauty, ensuring it is presented in its optimal state for all to enjoy.