

Farm Business Resilience Program

Water and Wire: helping to Regenerate 'Ashmount', Muckadilla Qld



David and Meredith Barrett, owners of 'Ashmount'

David and Meredith Barrett purchased 'Ashmount' in 2020 with a clear vision to restore the land. "The aim is to get the country soft underfoot," said David.

The property was suffering following long-term drought and overgrazing, but amongst the erosion and bare ground, David and Meredith saw potential. The Barretts already had an established cattle grazing enterprise at Theodore, Qld and bought Ashmount as part of their farm business resilience planning. Located 40km south-west of Muckadilla, Ashmount is 2,348 ha of rich alluvial flats, undulating country, and low stony ridges.

Historically, 'Ashmount' has been used for cattle and sheep grazing. When purchased, 'Ashmount' had complete exclusion fencing and 6 main paddocks with a few smaller holding paddocks. This had depleted the land as it encouraged set stocking and continuous grazing. Recognising this, David and Meredith focused on rest and recovery.

Challenges to recovery

With 'Ashmount' came challenges. David and Meredith needed to overcome erosion and reduced ground cover on persistent bare ground. There were large erosion areas on Topaz Creek, a major water system running through the property, and old cultivation country on the flats had become scalded which caused any rainfall or overland flow to run off the surface with minimal infiltration.



David Barrett standing in an eroded area on 'Ashmount', October 2023

Getting Started

When the SQ Landscapes project commenced in August 2023, 'Ashmount' was generally in good condition due to David and Meredith's dedication to restorative grazing and pasture management. A key aspect in the Barrett's resilience management strategy was implementing rest and rotation into their grazing management. For the Barretts, this meant running two mobs of cattle and moving them between paddocks so that the majority of the pasture was recovering to be 'rain ready.' Following an

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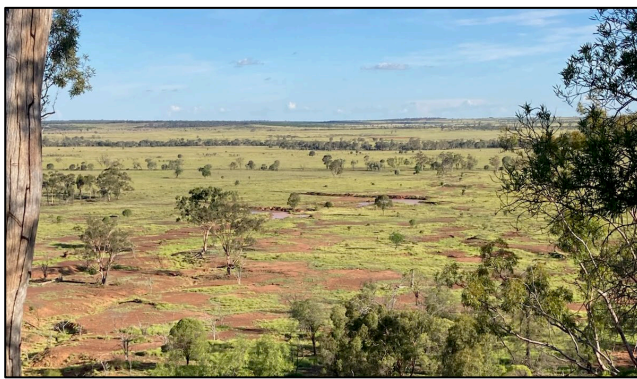
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initial site visit from Landscape Restoration Consultant, Glenn Landsberg, the Barretts confirmed they would like to carry out a 'Slow the Flow' rehydration project. In just 3 days, Glenn had the on-ground works marked out and ready for construction.

Making Change

With the help of SQ Landscapes, approximately 13km of spreader banks and blocks in eroded gullies were constructed across the property to slow the flow and encourage better water infiltration.

To complement this, the Barretts have also implemented an extensive Water and Wire project across 'Ashmount' which has included 30km of poly pipe and 30 new troughs thanks to the reliability of a good bore. Internal electric fencing now divides the property into 30 paddocks through which the cattle are rotationally grazed.



Spreader banks creating a chain of ponds on 'Ashmount' 2025

Many of the banks that directed water into the old dams were causing deep erosion. As the dams are no longer relied on for stock water, these banks have been strategically blocked to mitigate any further erosion and to form chains of ponds to help slow the flow. Shallow rippings were also used to open compacted and capped soils.

“It doesn't take a lot of money to make a big difference.”

The project has successfully regenerated many areas of 'Ashmount' with bare areas rejuvenating – showing increased water infiltration, improved ground cover, and enhanced land condition.



Ground cover amongst spreader banks, 'Ashmount' 2024

This work has significantly increased the drought resilience of 'Ashmount.' When talking to Meredith Barrett about the project, her key message was “It doesn't take a lot of money to make a big difference.”

David and Meredith's efforts are coordinated across both their properties as a part of their climate resilience planning. These works will continue to increase ground cover, reduce soil loss, and allow erosion features to heal.