

# QER Fuel for Thought

## Cheeky Wombat Grin?



Did you know that wombats grin? According to Jackie French – who spent years studying the mysterious creatures – individual wombats have different personalities...some are grumpy, some are placid, others cheeky and playful. A few are excellent engineers – digging a complex and resilient network of burrows. Others are pretty basic in the digging department, and failed burrow attempts are common. Their food preferences, mating habits, tolerance for other wombats also varies between individuals. Some are shy. Others more outgoing. Wombats ‘talk’ to each other...using a range of sounds and subtle differences in smell. Yep...smell. Wombats have a more refined and sophisticated sense of smell than bloodhounds. They can follow a scent for kilometres. They sometimes seem to sit in one place to enjoy the ‘view’ using the sense of smell of a ‘pretty’ landscape the same way we use sight. They are far more intelligent than most of us realize.

That’s probably more than you thought you’d ever know about wombats. As a species, we haven’t been too good at appreciating the awesome complexity in the lives of other species and have tended to ride roughshod over them (sometimes literally).

Like most native animals, wombats are threatened by habitat loss, predation, road kills and culling. There seems to be only a couple of

hundred northern hairy nosed wombats left. That’s why programs like the one at Gladstone’s own “Safe Haven” are so important. With the support of local donors and volunteers, Director of the program Tina Janssen has worked tirelessly on a shoestring budget for many years to contribute to research and education on the behaviours and breeding habits of wombats. Tina hopes the information learned from research into the 20 Southern Hairy Nosed wombats at the centre can be used to help preserve their rare Northern Hair Nosed cousins.



**Nigel Clements**  
Site Superintendent,  
QER Gladstone.

QER is a proud financial supporter of the program which has struggled through nearly 10 years of drought and declining donations. Now the Covid crisis has meant that the program has lost its usual cadre of backpacker volunteers who help care for the wombats and the Noah’s ark of sick and injured wildlife cared for at the centre.

In these difficult times when there isn’t too much good news around, it’s great to see someone working to help us appreciate and protect our rich natural heritage. If you’d like to donate or volunteer your time to help care for the animals, look up **AACE – Safe Haven on Facebook** or contact Tina [tina\\_janssen@bigpond.com](mailto:tina_janssen@bigpond.com) on 0408 613 914.