



Lucas Ihlein

24 October 2020 · 🌐



Very sad news. John Sweet died on Thursday after a few years with cancer. His beloved partner Christene has cared for him through his illness, and John knew he was immersed in the love of family and friends the whole time.

He was the initiator of our "Sugar vs the Reef?" project, which he kicked off one day in January 2014, calling me up out of the blue with a preposterous idea: the redesign of the entire Great Barrier Reef catchment following the Yeomans Keyline method.

His ideas were audacious and he always thought at the massive scale required for regeneration of the landscape and climate, which is what made him a compelling collaborator for Kim Williams and I. John believed that artists, farmers and community activists working together could effect change and he tirelessly devoted himself to making this a reality.

Thanks to John Sweet, Kim and I were able to work in Mackay regularly between 2016 and 2019, getting to know some excellent people in the sugarcane farming industry, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, and the environmental activism community.

He moved so easily and confidently between grassroots groups and politicians (local, state, federal) and was never afraid to tell them, very firmly, what needed to be done.

His belief system drew together diverse kinds of know-how, from the scientific, to the traditional, to the new-age. John strongly believed in the "wisdom of the elders" and embraced the opportunity to learn from the Yuwibara folks in Mackay, and the Australian South Sea Islanders who became core members of our working group.

His charm was so contagious, and his belief in social and environmental transformation was strong. It was this charm and belief that enabled him, over the six years I knew him, to gather together such a mixed community of people to work on the project of changing the world through the three Ms: - Minerals, Mulch and Microbes.

Last year, a wonderful article was written about John by [Kirili Lamb](#) in which his "triple M" philosophy is articulated clearly:

<http://www.watershedmackay.land/minerals-mulch-and-microbes/>

For many years John was a core member of the Local Marine Advisory Committee (LMAC) of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), and GBRMPA went on to become a key partner and supporter of our Watershed Land Art Project at the Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens in 2018-19.

John's greatest skill was connecting people with people. He loved all of his people, and included them in his vision - whether it was the guy who makes the wraps at the Cool Mango sandwich shop or the work experience kid at the Daily Mercury Newspaper or Mackay





Photocopied handwritten sheets of A4 paper with underscored lists, and extended landline phone calls were his tools for transforming the world.

One of his most recent projects involved collaborating with other farmers in applying for a multi-million dollar grant to establish a vast network of regenerative agriculture demonstration farms across Queensland, to transform our cultures of soil stewardship. This proposition hasn't yet come to pass but there's no doubt it's the right thing to do, and John knew it, which is why he had such clarity in his work.

John Sweet didn't use computers or mobile phones but he had a stronger social network than anyone I know. Sometimes we joked that he was the "godfather of regenerative agriculture". He was certainly the godfather of our project -- always there to broker new relationships behind the scenes, then step back to watch them play out.

And now he's stepped back for good, so it's up to us to make it all play out.

[Central Queensland Soil Health System](#) [Walter Jehne](#) [Carolyn Roche](#) [Kim Williams](#) [Mailin Suchting](#) [Cherrie Hughes](#) [Starrman Vea](#) [Vea Veronica Ah-Wang](#) [George Tonga](#) [Simon Mattsson](#) [Sue Mattsson](#) [Tracey Heathwood](#) [Artspace Mackay](#) [Mackay Conservation Group](#) [Mackay Regional Council](#) [Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens](#) [Daily Mercury](#) [7NEWS Mackay](#) [Mackay & District Australian South Sea Islander Association Inc.](#) [Char Miller](#) [Great Barrier Reef Marine Park](#) [Juliane Kasiske](#) [George Christensen](#) [Pioneer Catchment & Landcare Group Inc.](#) [Fiona Vuibeqa](#) [Christene Khan](#) [Melissa Spalding](#) [Tegan Philpott](#) [Tegan McBride](#) [Julie Boyd](#) [Carlos Bueno](#) [Stephen Andrew](#) [MP for Mirani](#) [Christina Yeomans](#) [Allan Yeomans](#) [Carla White](#) [Darren J. Doherty](#) [Kirsten Bradley](#) [Nick Ritar](#) [Pandurunga Permaculture Farm](#) [Kandos School of Cultural Adaptation](#) [Laura Fisher](#) [Jennifer Macey](#) [Ian Milliss](#)





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Roselle Pineda

What a beautiful homage Dr **Lucas Ihlein**, strength and care to all of you who loved him and those who will continue in his path and work.

Like · Reply · 18 w



Kim Williams

Well said Lucas  3

Like · Reply · 18 w



Christina Yeomans

Thank you **Lucas Ihlein** ... wonderful tribute to an extraordinary man. RIP John Sweet ❤️

Like · Reply · 18 w



Alex Wisser

beautiful story Lucas, I'm sad I never got a chance to meet John

Like · Reply · 18 w



 **Lucas Ihlein** replied · 1 reply



Kate Russell

Very good wrote up **Lucas Ihlein**. What a visionary and inspiring person.

Like · Reply · 18 w



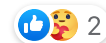
 **Lucas Ihlein** replied · 1 reply



Jonathon Dykyj

John was a great man. A very kind soul. Condolences to Christene and family. 🌞

Like · Reply · 18 w



Rhonda Murray

A lovely tribute **Lucas** x

Like · Reply · 18 w



Kirili Lamb

John was a beautiful man, well said **Lucas**

Like · Reply · 18 w



Rox De Luca

So sorry for your loss. Thanks for writing this **Lucas**, he clearly was so generous and smart and caring. By the way, **John Ford** and **George Hirst** did you know him?

Like · Reply · 18 w



 **George Hirst** replied · 1 reply



Mike Griffis

I didn't know him. **Lucas** But he sounds like a





Juundaal Strang-Yettica
Condolences to all. X

Like · Reply · 18 w 1



Tracy Sorensen
Vale John Sweet. 1

Like · Reply · 18 w



Jennifer Teo
My condolences 1

Like · Reply · 18 w



Laura Fisher
This is such a beautiful tribute **Lucas Ihlein**. A maverick of both gentle and forceful will. Looking forward to revisiting that interview

Like · Reply · 18 w 2

Lucas Ihlein replied · 1 reply



Mickie Quick
Fantastic eulogy! 1

Like · Reply · 18 w



Fiona MacDonald
Thank you **Lucas Ihlein**, a very sad loss.

Like · Reply · 18 w 1



Simon Mattsson
Wonderful words **Lucas Ihlein** John will be sorely missed and I hope we can remember him by continuing his vision for agriculture.

Like · Reply · 18 w 3



Mailin Suchting
Thank you Lucas and what a loss. John made the world a better place.

Like · Reply · 18 w 1



Kerry Latter
A man of commitment to the vision he held, with passion, yet empathy for the views of others and pleasure in sharing his ideas with all who would listen.

Like · Reply · 18 w 2

Lucas Ihlein replied · 1 reply



Kelly Reiffer
Beautiful words Lucas. He was also lucky to have you in his life.

Like · Reply · 18 w 1



Julie Boyd
A great loss and my heartfelt condolences to his family





Luke Mathews

THANKYOU **Lucas Ihlein**. THANKYOU Christine and family. Rest well mate.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 18 w



Judy Bourke

WOW that is such moving tribute. Much for us to learn from this man. thanks for writing this and sharing it

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 18 w



Deb McLucas

A moving tribute **Lucas Ihlein**. John certainly left his mark and we felt privileged to have know him and been influenced by his passion and determination to make positive change for all aspects of our community. Condolences to Christene and family. I k... [See more](#)

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 18 w



Deborah Ely

Oh no! Fantastic tribute Lucas - what a legacy.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 18 w



Veronica Ah-Wang

Oh! My **Lucas Ihlein** please pass my condolences to Christine. I loved talking with John he had such a wealth of wisdom. RIP John.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 17 w



James Cullen

Wonderful words for a strong man.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 17 w



Barbara Bolt

So sad Lucas.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 17 w



Central Queensland Soil Health System

Vale John Sweet. Such an inspiration to us all. He will be missed but never forgotten as his ideas still live on in us. His legacy will be felt for a long time to come and for that we thank him.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 17 w



Karen Donaldson

So sad to hear. Condolences to Christine and family. RIP John.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 17 w



Saul Goodman

Thank you for everything John...My life is enriched because of your inspiration. RIP Brother! Condolence to Christine and family.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 6 w



