

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY **STRATEGY.**

2018-2022

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

Rockhampton Regional Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we live and work and recognise their continuing connection to land, water and community. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Council also gratefully acknowledges contributions to our local natural environment by:

- BirdLife Capricornia
- Capricorn Conservation Council
- Capricornia Catchments
- CQUniversity
- Darumbal people
- Department of Environment and Science
- Department of Natural Resources and Mines
- Fitzroy Basin Association
- Fitzroy Partnership for River Health
- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
- Greening Australia
- Landcare
- Native Plants Capricornia
- The Rockhampton Region's community and local photographers



'New day reflection', Berserker Ranges from Woolwash Lagoon by Paul Holden



CREATING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR OUR REGION.

The environment is all around us. From the air we breathe to the soil beneath our feet. From the bush to our city streets. From our creeks to our mighty rivers and beyond.

Our natural environment sustains us, providing access to clean water, air, food and shelter. It also underpins our economy, climate and the liveability of our Region. How we feel about this environment is often shaped by our understanding and connection with nature. Many of us identify with specific sights, smells, sounds and experiences – like the smell of local trees in bloom, the sound of birds as you take a walk, the feeling of catching your first fish from the Fitzroy River or the cool fresh air as you take in views from Mount Archer. Protecting and maintaining this natural environment is essential if we want it to continue to support the liveability and prosperity of our Region.

At its heart, environmental sustainability is about taking care of the environment so that our environment can continue to take care of us, both now and indefinitely into the future. Sustainability requires that we tackle diverse goals, such as increasing water and energy efficiency, protecting water quality and biodiversity, reducing waste and altering transportation choices. If we are to hasten the transition to a sustainable future, we must encourage the adoption of a wide array of actions and behaviours that support these goals.

This Strategy provides a vision, shared objectives and pathways to advance sustainability across our Region. It also outlines the actions required for Council to integrate sustainable practices into its operations, as well as its community programs and services. Realising this vision will require Council to work in partnership with the community, private sector and other levels of government to ensure that we continue to protect and enhance our environment for current and future generations.



Councillor Drew Wickerson
Environment and Sustainability Portfolio



SUSTAINING OUR REGION.

Key drivers

Council has a significant opportunity to contribute to sustainability within our Region by influencing urban planning, transport, economic and community development; implementing best practice waste and water management; and by leading community education, public land management and the delivery of specific environment and sustainability programs. Council also has opportunities to minimise its environmental footprint and associated costs through reduction of waste, water, energy and resource use.

Council's move towards environmental sustainability has been influenced by a number of key drivers. These drivers include the desire to:

- better understand Council's and the community's environmental impacts;
- respond to community expectations by embracing our legal, moral and ethical responsibilities;
- promote ecologically sustainable development within our Region;
- continually improve our environmental performance by complying with and where practical exceeding the requirements of legislation, policies and standards;
- make wise use of our resources;
- control the increasing costs of fuel, water, energy and waste disposal;
- minimise and manage the risks associated with extreme weather events and our changing climate;
- reduce regulatory costs and liabilities;
- encourage a regional transition from a net consuming community to a net producing community;
- strengthen regional collaboration; and
- create new jobs and investment opportunities that will deliver long term social and economic benefits for our Region.

Why?

Before European settlement, traditional custodians lived on this land for thousands of years in a way that was sustainable and preserved the wildlife, habitat, waterways, land and air.

More recently, these natural assets have also supported our prosperity, through early gold mining days, agriculture, mining and tourism. And as we move forward, our natural assets present opportunities to contribute to our industries of the future and to provide social and cultural benefits to our communities including places for us to play and re-connect with nature.

OUR LOCAL CONTEXT.

Collectively our natural assets provide a range of ecosystem services that support our Region. They provide productive soils, supply water, dilute and remove pollutants, regulate weather, provide habitat for wildlife species, protect our waterways and absorb carbon. They also provide access to clean air, water, food and a variety of minerals.

Our community.



87,769

Rockhampton Region
residents



Total area of
6,560km²

Key townships of Rockhampton, Gracemere,
Mount Morgan and smaller townships of:

- Bajool
- Bouldercombe
- Kabra
- Marmor
- Stanwell
- Gogango
- Westwood



'Rainbow bee-eater', Murray Lagoon by Liam Rodenburg

The Rockhampton Region currently has about 30% of its original remnant vegetation (Queensland Government, 2017). Remnant vegetation can provide social benefits like tourism, education and recreation. It also provides habitat for our native flora and fauna, helps protect against salinity and soil erosion, assists in maintaining water quality and regulating water flows in our creeks and complements bushland protected in National Parks and other nature conservation reserves.

Our Region includes extensive wetlands, creeks and river systems covering nearly 6% of our total area. The Fitzroy River is the largest river catchment flowing to the east coast of Australia and directly connects us to the Great Barrier Reef.

A range of species are endangered, vulnerable or near threatened under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* including the glossy black cockatoo, yellow chat, powerful owl, black-breasted button quail, ghost bat, bridled nailtail wallaby, koala, greater glider, estuarine crocodile and the Fitzroy River Turtle.

Our native wildlife.



111
REPTILES



22
FROGS



37
FISH



331
BIRDS



71
MAMMALS

Our native vegetation.



30%
REMNANT VEGETATION
REMAINING



70
DIFFERENT REGIONAL
ECOSYSTEMS



1217
NATIVE PLANT
SPECIES

Our regional waterways.



Largest
RIVER CATCHMENT
FLOWING DIRECTLY
TO THE GREAT
BARRIER REEF



2nd
LARGEST SEAWARD
DRAINING CATCHMENT
IN AUSTRALIA



407km²
OF WETLAND HABITAT

Our climate.

Climate change presents a significant risk to Council's 'business as usual' structures. In coming years, it is predicted that the Rockhampton Region will experience:



HIGHER AVERAGE TEMPERATURES



HIGHER RISK OF FIRE



MORE RISK OF DROUGHT



MORE FREQUENT FLOODS



MORE SEVERE STORMS



MORE INTENSE DOWNPOURS



RISING SEA LEVEL



MORE EXTREME HEATWAVES



'Foggy dawn', Woolwash Lagoon by Paul Holden



Our challenges.

“The condition of our natural assets is expected to continue to decline as the population grows, land use intensifies and the climate progressively changes. Vegetation disturbance, soil erosion and impacts on water quality and quantity will continue to be important management challenges for the region.

The region currently supports stronghold populations of some species that used to be more widespread. These will be under further pressure, and more species will become locally extinct. Remnant vegetation is vulnerable to further clearing. Marine ecosystems, including the Great Barrier Reef, are expected to decline from the impacts of climate change, agricultural run-off and coastal development.

The impacts of increasing temperature and changing climate patterns on ecosystems are very difficult to predict. Maintaining the extent and connectivity of natural ecosystems, such as vegetation corridors and natural water flows, provides the best opportunities for ecosystems to adapt. Similarly, climate change poses a risk to industries and communities that rely on our natural assets.

Diverse economies, strong networks and a good knowledge base will best support regional adaptation.”

Central Queensland Sustainability Strategy (Fitzroy Basin Association, 2014)

OUR PATHWAYS TO A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE.

We know that the future isn't just somewhere we're going... it's something we're creating.

Our vision


We want the Rockhampton Region to be a great place to live, work, play, learn and invest - both now and for future generations.

Our approach

To achieve this vision, we must choose to create a Region where our environment is a key priority. Already there's a lot happening to protect, maintain and enhance our environment. However, there's still more work to be done.

Council is committed to putting sustainability into action through its corporate commitments and governance arrangements; its strategies and operations; and its community services, programs and partnerships. But we cannot implement this sustainability vision on our own. Only together can we create the sustainable future we want to see for our Region.

In pursuing this sustainability journey, Council recognises the need to work collaboratively, learn from our experiences and refine our approach to ensure we continue to support actions that are both practical and effective. This Strategy will deliver on our vision for a sustainable future through four interconnected pathways. Together the pathways will help guide our approach to protect our natural environment, empower our community to live more sustainably, enhance the liveability of our Region, ensure that we use our resources more wisely and much more. The pathways are supported by a range of strategic actions that Council will lead over the next four years.



"An environmentally balanced and aware community which preserves and maintains our natural environment and incorporates contemporary and proven sustainability principles, as part of all activities for current and future generations"

**Rockhampton Regional Council
Corporate Plan 2017-2021**



NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.

Let's work together to protect, maintain and enhance our natural environment.



EMPOWERING COMMUNITY.

Let's work together to strengthen our community capacity to live sustainably.



OUR VISION.

We want the Rockhampton Region to be a great place to LIVE, WORK, PLAY, LEARN & INVEST - both now and for future generations.



INDUSTRY & INFRASTRUCTURE.

Let's work together to create a liveable region that encourages sustainable industry and infrastructure.



COUNCIL OPERATIONS.

Let's work together to continually improve Council's corporate sustainability.

OBJECTIVE

Let's work together to protect, maintain and enhance our natural environment.

TARGETS

- Programs in place to maintain and enhance our natural assets, waterways and green corridors
- Programs in place to protect remnant vegetation and support local biodiversity in urban areas
- Long-term trending improvement in net waterway health

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

- 1.1** Take steps to better understand our local natural environment and its inherent biodiversity values in order to inform and prioritise management actions.
- 1.2** Implement programs and foster strong partnerships to maintain and enhance the condition of our natural assets including key natural areas, green corridors and urban waterways.
- 1.3** Develop tools to better protect our natural environment, local biodiversity and remnant vegetation from development and other pressures.
- 1.4** Celebrate our natural areas, and their contribution to the liveability of our region, through a targeted long-term communications campaign.



KEY FOCUS AREAS.

- Reef Guardian Council's program
- Fitzroy Partnership for River Health
- Collaborative arrangements with our local natural resource management groups
- Implementation of the Biosecurity Plan including weed and pest management activities
- Parks maintenance and improvement activities
- Developing a natural environment plan
- On-ground environmental management works
- Embedding sustainability in planning policies
- Environmental communications and engagement activities

'Green bushland', Mount Morgan by Claudia Brooks

OBJECTIVE

Let's work together to strengthen our community capacity to live sustainably.

TARGETS

- Community sustainability engagement programs in place
- Community-based environment and sustainability initiatives encouraged and recognised
- Increased canopy cover within the urban footprint

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

- 2.1** Bring nature back into the community's hearts, minds and everyday lives by creating opportunities to connect with nature and get involved with Council's natural environment program.
- 2.2** Foster sustainable behaviour and encourage the community's wise-use of resources, through targeted sustainability communications and engagement programs.
- 2.3** Encourage initiatives that increase canopy cover within our urban areas and green corridors.
- 2.4** Provide support and funding for community-based environment and sustainability initiatives.
- 2.5** Recognise and celebrate sustainability improvements achieved by local individuals, schools, businesses and community organisations.

KEY FOCUS AREAS.

- Waste reduction and recycling programs
- Water-wise education program and water rebates for water efficient products
- Support to community groups via the Community Assistance Program
- Support for events such as Tropicana, Small Landholders Day, Fitzroy River Barrage Open Day, National Tree Day and Clean Up Australia Day
- Targeted environment and sustainability engagement programs
- Street tree inventory
- Streetscape planting and maintenance program

'Sunset paradise', Paradise Lagoons by Jason Miller

OBJECTIVE

Let's work together to create a liveable region that encourages sustainable industry and infrastructure.

TARGETS

- Council's planning instruments actively encourage sustainable development
- Major Council projects incorporate sustainable design and procurement considerations
- Eco-tourism ratings achieved for key local destinations

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

- 3.1** Develop and maintain partnerships that encourage sustainable industry and infrastructure.
- 3.2** Grow local visitation and tourism opportunities that celebrate our natural areas and contribute to the liveability of our region.
- 3.3** Maximise opportunities to embed environment and sustainability considerations within planning, policy and infrastructure development.
- 3.4** Encourage and raise the profile of best practice environmentally sustainable development through a range of local demonstration projects.
- 3.5** Develop resilience to our changing climate and extreme weather events, by improving our understanding of the environmental impacts of these events and the available response options.



KEY FOCUS AREAS.

- Eco-tourism programs including the continued implementation of the Mount Archer Activation Plan and Recreational Fishing Strategy
- Active transport and land use planning
- Ecologically sustainable development practices
- Showcasing leading water management practices
- Energy efficiency and renewable energy projects

OBJECTIVE

Let's work together to continually improve Council's corporate sustainability.

TARGETS

- Internal sustainability engagement program in place
- Environmental management systems operating for nominated units
- Increased proportion of Council's electricity sourced from renewable energy

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

- 4.1** Demonstrate sustainability leadership by integrating environmental sustainability as a core principle within Council's governance framework.
- 4.2** Foster sustainable behaviour, and encourage Council's wise use of resources, by exploring opportunities to use our resources more efficiently.
- 4.3** Implement a program to better understand and manage Council's environmental risks.
- 4.4** Demonstrate progress on corporate sustainability improvements via Council's Annual Report and associated communications.



KEY FOCUS AREAS.

- Sustainability to be embedded in procurement plans and procedures
- Internal sustainability engagement program, supported by a sustainability seed fund to help staff identify and trial key opportunities for improvement
- Reduced waste and improved energy and water efficiency
- Continuing improvements to landfill gas, leachate and stormwater management at Lakes Creek Road landfill



IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY.

This Strategy acts as a bridge between our Corporate Plan commitments and the implementation of environmental sustainability initiatives through our annual Operational Plan. Council acknowledges that actively pursuing a coordinated approach to sustainability will better integrate economic, environmental, social and governance considerations across all decision-making processes. Adoption of this Strategy will also enable Council to build on its commitment to a sustainable future, embed environmental sustainability into the core business of Council and influence the continuing quality of life, prosperity and liveability of our Region.

This Strategy will be supported by:

- Continued development of our **regional and community partnerships** to ensure we make the best use of finite resources and avoid duplication of effort or missed opportunities.
- Strong sustainability leadership, supported by a clear **sustainability governance framework** and internal Council working groups.
- An annual **action plan**, embedded within Council's Operational Plan, that details the desired programs and resources required to implement the Strategy.
- **Budget** for implementing the annual action plan, subject to annual Council budget approvals and other sources such as government grants and incentive programs.
- An annual **engagement and communications plan** to ensure that Council employees, its partners and the community are engaged and informed during the life of the Strategy. This will be delivered through Council's programs, events, Council meetings, newsletters, notices, website and social media.
- Regular **monitoring and evaluation**, in conjunction with the quarterly review of the Operational Plan, to determine the extent to which actions within the Strategy are being successfully implemented, meeting their objectives and effectively engaging Council and the community to advance sustainability.
- An **annual update on implementation of this Strategy** at the end of each financial year as part of Council's annual reporting process to ensure this sustainability journey remains open and transparent to all involved.



'The perennial Frenchmans Creek' by Geoff Higgins

GET INVOLVED.

Whether you're an individual, family, community group or local business, you can help to support a sustainable future for the Rockhampton Region. Here's how:

- Learn**
- Understand your own environmental impact and the opportunities to reduce these impacts both at home and at work.
 - Read, take a course or visit Council's website to find out more: www.rockhamptonregion.qld.gov.au/EnvironmentalSustainability
 - Sign up to Council's sustainability e-newsletter to stay up to date with local sustainability projects and events.

- Act**
- Be proactive and create positive change in your life. Start with the issues that matter most to you – get out and reconnect with nature, eat locally grown sustainable food, start composting, use reusable coffee cups, water bottles and shopping bags or invest in renewable energy. Every little bit counts.
 - Be part of the solution. Join a local group undertaking projects that interest you or develop a new initiative to encourage the kind of change you'd like to see in our Region.

- Share**
- Help others to support a sustainable future by sharing your sustainability journey with your friends and family - in person or via social media.
 - Or share your sustainability hacks with us by emailing sustainability@rrc.qld.gov.au and we'll help you share the word.

"You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make." - Jane Goodall





Inc.
ents:org.au

Fitz
Fitz

LIVE LIFE
LOVE
LIFE

'Afterglow', Yeppen Lagoon by Russell Prothero



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