

Environmental Defenders Office Of Northern Queensland Inc.



28 November 2008

The Hon Mr. Paul Lucas MP
Deputy Premier and Minister for Infrastructure and Planning
Department of Infrastructure and Planning
PO Box 5194
Cairns Queensland 4870

Dear Deputy Premier,

CONSULTATION REPORT ON:

? ***draft* FNO2025 REGIONAL PLAN**

? ***draft* STATE PLANNING REGULATORY PROVISIONS (REGIONAL PLANS)**

As you are aware, the Environmental Defenders Office of Northern Queensland Inc. ("EDONQ") is an independent, not-for-profit community legal centre which specialises in public interest environmental law. EDONQ's service area covers the breadth of Queensland, from Sarina in the south to Queensland's border with Papua New Guinea in the north.

The fact that no other organisation provides the service which EDONQ does in the northern half of Queensland (EDONQ's service area), and indeed within the jurisdiction of FNO2025 Regional Plan ("FNO2025"), places EDONQ in a unique position to be able to provide considered submissions on environmental law and policy in relation the legal 'mechanics' of implementing and delivering the FNO2025 and achieving its goals, amongst other things.

EDONQ thanks the State Government and the Department of Infrastructure and Planning ("DIP") for, and welcomes, the opportunity to provide our submissions on the *Consultation Report* ["Consultation Report"] on the *FNO Draft Regional Plan* ["FNO2025"] and the *State Planning Regulatory Provisions (Regional Plans)* ["SP Regulations"].

We are pleased to be able to provide our considered submissions on the input into their formulation.

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We recognise the importance and potential for the FNQ2025 to deliver sound and sustainable regional sustainability in Far North Queensland for the benefit of the environment, and ultimately everyone. Obvious goals for sustainable regional planning include achieving and maintaining healthy, strong and sustainable environments, economies and communities. EDONQ believes that the FNQ2025 has the real potential to attain those goals *if properly formulated and properly implemented*.

In formulating our submissions EDONQ has consulted with CAFNEC and a wide range of other community based conservation organisations in the Far North Queensland ("FNQ") region.

These submissions reflect EDONQ's firm belief (supported by many of our clients and members) that the FNQ2025 must be:

1. the paramount consideration when drafting or amending planning policies and planning schemes for the FNQ region;
2. properly reflected in all new and amended planning policies and planning schemes for the FNQ region;
3. thoughtfully, independently and completely implemented and enforced.

We thank you once again for the opportunity to provide our submissions on the Consultation Report, and in anticipation of your favourable consideration of our **enclosed** submissions (contained in pages 3 to 38 inclusive of these submissions).

Of course, please do not hesitate to contact our offices if you or any of your staff would like to discuss any aspect of these submissions.

Kind regards,
EDONQ



Adam Millar
Principal Solicitor & Coordinator
Encl.

Submissions of the Environmental Defenders Office of Northern Queensland Inc. (“EDONQ”) in relation to the Consultation Report on:

- ? **Far North Queensland Draft Regional Plan (“FNQ2025”); and**
- ? **State Planning Regulatory Provisions (Regional Plans) (“SP Regulations”)**

EDONQ is an independent, not-for-profit community legal centre which specialises in public interest environmental law, and operates in a service area covering the breadth of Queensland, from Sarina in the south to Queensland’s border with Papua New Guinea in the north. EDONQ is the only organisation of its kind which operates within the jurisdiction of FNQ2025 Regional Plan (“FNQ2025”).

EDONQ is one of nine (9) community legal centres in each State and Territory throughout Australia, specialising in public interest environmental law and policy; all EDOs together form the Australian Network of Environmental Defenders Offices (“ANEDO”). Each EDO within ANEDO is dedicated to protecting the environment in the public interest, and to do so by providing legal representation and advice, taking an active role in environmental law reform and policy formulation, and offering significant education programs designed to facilitate public participation in environmental decision making throughout Australia.

EDONQ is in a unique position to be able to provide considered submissions on environmental law and policy in relation the legal ‘mechanics’ of implementing and delivering the FNQ2025 and its goals, amongst other things.

There are three (3) aspects of the Consultation Report which these submissions are intended to address:

1. the content and text of the Consultation Report itself (*Section 1*);
2. the specific questions posed in the Consultation Report (*Section 2*);
3. the proposed changes to Section 1.1: Biodiversity Conservation in the draft FNQ2025 Regional Plan (“FNQ2025”) (*Section 3*).

Section 1: Content and text of Consultation Report

There are a number of statements which appear in the Consultation Report which we feel obliged to provide comment on. Below we have repeated those statements in turn in italics in text boxes, and have provided our comments on those statements immediately following those text boxes.

Statement 1:

1. Background and purpose

Far North Queensland (FNQ) is one of the fastest-growing urban regions outside the south east corner of the state. With a current population of 220 000 residents—and projected growth of greater than 100 000 new people over the next 20 years—governments and communities face significant challenges to manage this growth in a way that balances development with the local lifestyle.

The Queensland Government announced in 2006 that it would develop a statutory regional plan for the region to meet these challenges. When completed, the Far North Queensland Regional Plan 2025 (FNQ 2025) will provide a regulatory planning framework—that carries a range of powers—to manage FNQ’s anticipated high population growth and protect its unique environmental features.

(Page 2: FNQ2025 Consultation Report)

1. We congratulate and commend the Queensland Government for developing a statutory (binding) regional plan for the Far North Queensland Region (“FNQ Region”).
2. The FNQ Region is internationally recognised for its unique and irreplaceable natural environment, including the two World Heritage Areas which we have; the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (“WTWHA”) and the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (“GBRWHA”).
3. It is absolutely critical that the values, biodiversity and critical ecological processes which exist in and are provided by natural environment in the FNQ Region (which importantly include the WTWHA and the GBRWHA), are protected, conserved, maintained and enhanced for the benefit of all Far North Queenslanders, and indeed all Queenslanders and Australians alike.
4. The health and future sustainability of Far North Queensland’s natural environment (including the values, biodiversity and critical ecological processes which exist in and are provided by it) are vital to the health and future sustainability of our local and regional economies.
5. Therefore, we submit that it is more responsible and prudent for Governments exercising jurisdiction over the FNQ Region should take

proactive steps to *'control'* growth rather than simply accepting that a certain (or estimated) amount of growth will inevitably occur and attempting to *'manage'* that growth (as the current language used suggests is the current approach). Governments in the FNQ Region have the powers coupled with an excellent opportunity to use them to proactively control the growth of region to ensure that it's environments and dependent economies (which includes all regional economies in the FNQ Region) are healthy and sustainable into the future, and we therefore submit that those Governments exercise those powers through the FNQ2025 Regional Plan.

Statement 2:

1.1 Far North Queensland Draft Regional Plan 2025

The draft regional plan represents a shift from responding to growth issues, to proactively managing growth for the long-term ecological and economic sustainability of the region.

(Page 4: FNQ2025 Consultation Report)

6. The language and text used in the FNQ2025 Regional Plan suggests otherwise than what is asserted in this statement.
7. The FNQ2025 Regional Plan accepts as its basis that a certain (or estimated) amount of growth will occur in the FNQ Region in coming years, and attempts to simply manage the impacts of that growth, rather than proactively managing (i.e. controlling) that growth.
8. We support the above statement but submit that:
 - a. its sentiment is not carried through into the text or outcomes of the FNQ2025 Regional Plan; and
 - b. the text and outcomes of the FNQ2025 Regional Plan be amended to reflect and give effect to this sentiment.

Statement 3:**1.2 Draft State Planning Regulatory Provisions (Regional Plans)**

The draft SPRP was prepared under Chapter 2 Part 5C of IPA as a stand-alone document to complement and provide regulatory support to the draft regional plan. The provisions came into effect when gazetted on 9 May 2008 and aim to regulate certain land use and development in the region. The draft SPRP also outlines aspects of development that may not occur in stated locations. They remain in force until the final SPRP is gazetted and comes into effect—or until a decision is made by the Planning Minister not to make such provisions for the region.

(Page 4: FNQ2025 Consultation Report)

9. We repeat and rely upon our previous submissions specifically in relation to the draft State Planning Regulatory Provisions (Regional Plans).

Statement 4:**3.3 Community response**

The community response to the draft regional plan and draft SPRP was significant, with 967 formal submissions received. These submissions included 4634 requests for changes to the boundaries of the regional land use categories. The quantity of submissions suggest that the consultation achieved a high degree of community awareness of regional planning issues and was successful in providing individuals and organisations with the opportunity to express their views. Of the 967 submissions received, 68 per cent were from private individuals. The remainder were from community, business, commercial and other professional organisations. One hundred and fourteen duplicate submissions processed were not included in the formal count.

Under IPA, only submissions that are properly made must be considered when finalising the regional plan. Schedule 10 of IPA stipulates the requirements for submissions to be considered properly made. However, all submissions that were made within the consultation period—including those not properly made according to Schedule 10 of IPA—have been considered.

Some submissions were received in the form of petitions signed by a number of people. These were treated as properly made submissions and were registered under the name of the person submitting the petition.

(Page 9: FNQ2025 Consultation Report)

10. We are concerned with the statement that:

"One hundred and fourteen duplicate submissions processed were not included in the formal count."

11. We would only agree to ignoring and submissions which were truly "duplicate" (i.e. made by the same person). Submissions which are made by different people which are the same or similar must be considered as submissions in their own right; the fact that more than one person has made a submission on an issue does not render those submissions to be "duplicate". Those submissions do not "duplicate" each other as they are from separate people.
12. We are also concerned with the following statement:

"Some submissions were received in the form of petitions signed by a number of people. These were treated as properly made submissions and were registered under the name of the person submitting the petition."

13. We would hope that each signature on each petition was treated (and counted) as a properly made submission in their own right, for reasons including those given in paragraphs 10 and 11 above, but this is unclear from the Consultation Report.

Statement 5:

4: Key issues raised in submissions

4.1: Overview of submissions

Summary of key themes arising from submissions

Statutory planning mechanisms

A high number of submissions highlighted the need to have strong statutory planning mechanisms to control urban development, particularly:

- strong mechanisms to protect areas of high ecological significance, particularly within the Urban Footprint*
- strong controls to protect and manage waterways and improve water quality, and protect the Great Barrier Reef*
- strong mechanisms to protect the natural environment and village character of Mission Beach*
- controls on subdivision of rural land and rural residential development to prevent urban sprawl, protect natural resources and limit further fragmentation of productive agricultural land.*

In contrast, there were a number of submissions suggesting that government

take a more collaborative, less interventionist approach in relation to statutory planning mechanisms.

(Page 11: FNQ2025 Consultation Report)

14. We support the need for strong statutory planning mechanisms in order to control urban development in the ways listed in this statement.
15. However, we say that it is important that development in all parts of the FNQ Region be appropriately controlled for those reasons and others.
16. For example:
 - a. it is vitally important to the FNQ Region that areas of high ecological status be protected whether within the urban footprint or not (refer to the first dot point in statement 5 above);
 - b. strong controls be put in place throughout the FNQ Region (whether in the urban footprint or otherwise) to protect and manage waterways and improve water quality, and consequently help protect the Great Barrier Reef (refer to the second dot point in statement 5 above);
17. In addition, we support the Government having and exercising the intervening role which is being promoted through the FNQ2025 Regional Plan.
18. In the FNQ Region, history has shown that without State Government intervention to impose measures, conditions and requirements to ensure that critical habitat is protected from loss, fragmentation and degradation, local governments will not necessarily take appropriate action to ensure such protection; the voluntary nature of the alternative proposition (i.e. that the State Government take a less interventionist approach) will present a discretion in favour of local governments to depart from proper conservation measures, such a discretion being susceptible to undue and inappropriate influence by vested interests, including from the development industry, and otherwise.

Statement 6:**4: Key issues raised in submissions****4.1: Overview of submissions****Summary of key themes arising from submissions****Need to support economic growth, including tourism**

Submissions stated that mechanisms should be sufficiently flexible to accommodate economic growth, innovation and diversification. In particular, that more industrial land needs to be made available to support economic growth and that there should be a greater emphasis given to the potential for mining, tourism and agricultural industries in the region. The importance of the tourism industry was highlighted in a number of submissions, with requests for revisions to the regulatory provisions to ensure an appropriate balance between environmental protection and eco-tourism opportunities is achieved.

(Page 11: FNO2025 Consultation Report)

19. We once again stress that:
- a. It is absolutely critical that the values, biodiversity and critical ecological processes which exist in and are provided by the natural environment in the FNQ Region (which importantly includes the WTWHA and the GBRWHA), are protected, conserved, maintained and enhanced for the benefit of all Far North Queenslanders, and indeed all Queenslanders and Australians alike.
 - b. The health and future sustainability of Far North Queensland's natural environment (including the values, biodiversity and critical ecological processes which exist in and are provided by it) are vital to the health and future sustainability of our local and regional economies.
 - c. The health and future sustainability of our local and regional economies (including our tourism economy) depend entirely upon the health and future sustainability of Far North Queensland's natural environment.
20. In light of those submissions, we support "an appropriate balance between environmental protection and eco-tourism opportunities", but say that where there is a conflict between the two, then the balance must be exercised in favour of environmental protection.

Statement 7:**4. Key issues raised in submissions****4.1 Overview of submissions****Summary of key themes arising from submissions**

...

Effect of biodiversity protection on agriculture and tourism

There was strong support for ecological sustainability, and a number of submissions noted the need to balance the protection of biodiversity with economic development.

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21. We once again stress that:
 - a. It is absolutely critical that the values, biodiversity and critical ecological processes which exist in and are provided by the natural environment in the FNQ Region (which importantly includes the WTWHA and the GBRWHA), are protected, conserved, maintained and enhanced for the benefit of all Far North Queenslanders, and indeed all Queenslanders and Australians alike.
 - b. The health and future sustainability of Far North Queensland's natural environment (including the values, biodiversity and critical ecological processes which exist in and are provided by it) are vital to the health and future sustainability of our local and regional economies.
 - c. The health and future sustainability of our local and regional economies (including our tourism economy) depend entirely upon the health and future sustainability of Far North Queensland's natural environment.
22. In light of those submissions, we support "the need to balance protection of biodiversity with economic development", but say that where there is a conflict between the two, then the balance must be exercised in favour of protection of biodiversity.

Statement 8:**5: Strategic issues and options****5.1: Biodiversity conservation**

The protection of biodiversity was raised by 294 submitters. Eighty per cent of these supported the principle of biodiversity conservation and the need for policies to be strengthened. Twenty per cent of the submissions generally supported the policy in principle, but had concerns regarding map 5: (FNQ areas of ecological significance) of the draft regional plan and its impact on agriculture and tourism in the region.

What the draft regional plan said

The draft regional plan includes policies to conserve areas of ecological significance, both inside and outside the Urban Footprint, and identifies potential conservation corridors that could be revegetated in the future to create strategic links between areas of high ecological significance. The protection of these areas is intended to strengthen the resilience of flora and fauna against the predicted effects of increased development in the region and climate change impacts.

The policies aimed to manage the impacts of new urban development and are not intended to prevent existing agricultural activities or appropriate nature-based tourist attractions from taking place. It is important to note that these policies are only triggered during the assessment of a development application.

(Page 12: FNQ2025 Consultation Report)

23. In relation to the following statement:

"Twenty per cent of the submissions generally supported the policy in principle, but had concerns regarding map 5: (FNQ areas of ecological significance) of the draft regional plan and its impact on agriculture and tourism in the region."

we once again stress that:

- a. It is absolutely critical that the values, biodiversity and critical ecological processes which exist in and are provided by the natural environment in the FNQ Region (which importantly includes the WTWHA and the GBRWHA), are protected, conserved, maintained and enhanced for the benefit of all Far North Queenslanders, and indeed all Queenslanders and Australians alike;
- b. The health and future sustainability of Far North Queensland's natural environment (including the values, biodiversity and critical ecological processes which exist in and are provided by it) are vital to the health and future sustainability of our local and regional economies; and

- c. The health and future sustainability of our local and regional economies (including our tourism economy) depend entirely upon the health and future sustainability of Far North Queensland's natural environment.

24. In relation to the following statement:

*"The draft regional plan includes policies to conserve areas of ecological significance, both inside and outside the Urban Footprint, and identifies potential conservation corridors that **could** be revegetated in the future to create strategic links between areas of high ecological significance."* [our emphasis]

we say that:

- a. we are concerned with the use of the word "could" in relation to the revegetation of conservation corridors; and
- b. the word "could" must be removed and replaced with the word "must" in order to reflect the importance of revegetating those conservation corridors, and to create a positive obligation to do so.

25. In relation to the following statement:

"The policies aimed to manage the impacts of new urban development and are not intended to prevent existing agricultural activities or appropriate nature-based tourist attractions from taking place. It is important to note that these policies are only triggered during the assessment of a development application."

we say that:

- a. Any new activity, including urban (and tourism) or agricultural must be assessed for its impact on the integrity and function of wildlife corridors and areas of ecological significance.
- b. Indeed, existing agricultural practices which cause unacceptable adverse impacts upon the environment must be phased out or altered over time so that *all* agricultural practices in the future are conducted with protection and conservation of the environment and biodiversity as a core (and compatible) focus.

Statement 9:**5 Strategic issues and options****5.1 Biodiversity conservation**

...

The biodiversity policies intend to ensure urban development does not diminish biodiversity values. Agricultural activities— or other activities that are currently exempt from development under Schedule 9 of the IPA—or activities that are managed under the Vegetation Management Act 1999 (VMA) would not be affected by the policies. The draft regional plan also supports the further development and implementation of environmental offsets and ecosystem services concepts.

The policies do not identify new forms of assessable development beyond those that are already made assessable through Schedule 8 of the IPA. They are intended to assist assessment managers in determining the impact of urban development as part of the assessment process. The mapped areas of ecological significance will provide local government with an information overlay indicating where such areas are located within the overall regional context. It is not intended that agricultural activities will be additionally affected by the policies, as these activities are already managed under the VMA.

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26. In relation to the following statement:

The biodiversity policies intend to ensure urban development does not diminish biodiversity values. Agricultural activities— or other activities that are currently exempt from development under Schedule 9 of the IPA—or activities that are managed under the Vegetation Management Act 1999 (VMA) would not be affected by the policies.

we say that:

- a. Any new activity, including urban (and tourism) or agricultural must be assessed for its impact on the integrity and function of wildlife corridors and areas of ecological significance.
- b. Indeed, existing agricultural practices which cause unacceptable adverse impacts upon the environment must be phased out or altered over time so that *all* agricultural practices in the future are conducted with protection and conservation of the environment and biodiversity as a core (and compatible) focus.

27. In relation to the following statement:

The draft regional plan also supports the further development and implementation of environmental offsets and ecosystem services concepts.

we say make the following submissions:

28. EDONQ is absolutely opposed to any use whatsoever of Environmental Offsets as a condition to a development approval. Environmental Offsets are nothing more than a licence to commit environmental harm, and have no place in any credible attempt to ensure environmental protection and conservation.
29. **Simply put, if a development would create an impact upon the environment that would, in itself (i.e. without any reference to an environmental offset, whether proposed or not), create or cause an unacceptable environmental impact then any development approval should properly be refused and the proponent forced to develop a proposal which will not cause such impacts in order to obtain any development approval.**
30. Alternatively, in the event that the flawed concept of environmental offsets is pursued and allowed under the FNQ2025 in relation to development applications and approvals, EDONQ recommends the following:
- a. The focus of any environmental offsets policy should properly be an 'enhancement' of the environment and its values and recognises and reflects the fact that the environment has already been significantly degraded as a result of past human impacts, and that actions are required to reverse the trend.¹
 - b. Developers adopt the following hierarchy to avoid and minimise to the greatest extent prior to offsetting:
 - i. Avoid adverse environmental impacts.
 - ii. Where adverse environmental impacts cannot be avoided, such impacts must be minimised through appropriate and effective mitigation measures.
 - iii. 'Environmental offsets' should only be considered only when all steps to avoid and minimise adverse environmental impacts have been taken.
31. If the above three-step approach does not achieve a net environmental gain then the relevant development should be rejected.
32. Discretion should be exercised to refuse development proposals where there are unacceptable ecological impacts.
33. Environmental protection measures to avoid and minimise impacts must be undertaken first and extensively demonstrated by developers e.g.

¹ Western Australia Environmental Protection Authority (2006) *Environmental Offsets. Position Statement No. 9.*

environmental management plans, monitoring, mitigation, environmental audits, etc;

34. Offset options may be explored to enhance environmental values, only where:
 - a. a comprehensive, transparent, peer reviewed scientific methodology has been approved and used to determine the appropriate offset(s); and
 - b. the offset(s) will achieve a 'net environmental *gain*' (i.e. environmental values are 'enhanced' rather than simply 'maintained').
35. Offsets must only be considered after all other options have been exhausted to attempt to:
 - a. Firstly, avoid any adverse environmental impacts; and
 - b. Secondly, mitigate any adverse environmental impacts which cannot be avoided.
36. Offsets must not be used in relation to any site, species or ecologically community that has been designated or listed not appropriate for offsetting (e.g. no offsets for 'endangered' or 'of concern' regional ecosystems or local ecosystems). This includes ensuring that offsetting in no way allows development to proceed in areas which it would presently not be able to proceed.
37. Offsets must be protected in entirety at a level of protection equivalent to Regional Ecosystems or better. Offsets must not be able to offset themselves in the future.
38. Offset areas can only be used if it is unprotected. However, it must take into consideration the ecosystem being cleared and gain the same level of protection as the area being impacted.
39. Environmental Offsets must deliver a 'like for like' ecological equivalence and provide greater environmental quality and quantity. The size of the offset area should be larger than the area to be cleared for development. The offset area must contain the possibility of increasing the habitat and the populations of the affected species.
40. All offset areas must have detailed:
 - a. Environmental management plans that specify how the offset area will achieve the conditions of "Endangered Regional Ecosystems" ("ERE") or "Of Concern Regional Ecosystems" ("OCRE");
 - b. Assessment to quantify achievement of ERE or OCRE;
 - c. Remedial actions to be undertaken; and
 - d. Monitoring and evaluation program.
41. Environmental offsets should only be used to attempt to secure a beneficial environmental outcome (a 'net environmental gain' at an absolute minimum), and under no circumstances should any environmental offset be used to facilitate, or attempt to facilitate, a development outcome.

42. **Most importantly, environmental offsets must be established *before* any proposed development which may result in an adverse environmental impact is undertaken (i.e. any development approval is only issued, and only able to be acted upon, if and when (if possible) the proponent clearly establishes with proper evidence that the environmental offset has been established and is functioning at a level at least equal to what is required in order to purportedly “offset” the environmental damage that will be caused by the relevant proposal).**

Statement 10:

5.: Strategic issues and options

5.1: Biodiversity conservation

Issues raised in submissions

Many people were generally supportive of the policies, but would like them strengthened to provide a higher level of protection for areas of high ecological significance, especially those that are within the Urban Footprint.

A view was expressed that the draft regional plan should include more detail on the delivery mechanisms to achieve better environmental outcomes.

(Page 14: FNO2025 Consultation Report)

43. We support the view that Biodiversity Conservation policies should be strengthened to provide a higher level of protection for areas of high ecological significance throughout the FNO Region, particularly those that are within the Urban Footprint.
44. We also support the views that:
- a. delivery mechanisms should be strengthened to ensure the achievement of better (and sufficient) environmental outcomes; and
 - b. the draft regional plan should include more detail on those delivery mechanisms (those to achieve better environmental outcomes).

Statement 11:**5: Strategic issues and options****5.2: Protection of waterways and water quality****What the draft regional plan said**

FNQ contains a diverse and extensive network of waterway systems that are important to the broader community. They provide significant biodiversity, habitat, ecological connectivity, air and water purification, flood mitigation, drawcards for nature-based tourism and new residents, rural and urban water supplies, extractive resources, electricity generation, cultural heritage values, recreational opportunities, scenic amenity and sense of place.

(Page 15: FNQ2025 Consultation Report)

45. We submit that whether FNQ's "diverse and extensive network of waterway systems" are "drawcards for... ..new residents" is irrelevant when considering what measures need to be put in place to ensure their protection.
46. We must move away from such an anthropocentric view of the importance of those waterway systems.

Statement 12:**5. Strategic issues and options****5.2: Protection of waterways and water quality**

The draft regional plan recognises the need to protect the region's waterways and improve water quality. The draft plan's biodiversity policies (section 1.1) aim to protect wetlands and waterways of high ecological significance, while the water quality policies (section 7.1) seek to prevent clearing of vegetation in riparian areas and improve water quality through best practice design, rehabilitation and management.

Recommended setback distances for development adjacent to waterways are included in the explanatory notes.

(Page 17: FNQ2025 Consultation Report)

47. We are concerned that it appears that the waterway policies in section 7.1 only "seek to prevent clearing of vegetation in riparian areas". The Government is benefited by having powers to "ensure" that vegetation in riparian areas is prevented, rather than merely 'seeking' to prevent it.

Statement 13:**5: Strategic issues and options****5.2: Protection of waterways and water quality**

Broad scale clearing of vegetation outside of urban areas is already managed under the VMA. The setback distances for new developments included in the explanatory notes are based on the setback distances under the VMA codes.

(Page 17: FNO2025 Consultation Report)

48. Whilst we acknowledge that the *Vegetation Management Act 1999* (Qld) (referred to as the “VMA” in relation to) attempts to manage broadscale clearing of vegetation outside of urban areas, we submit that:
- a. The set-back distances for Riparian Zone widths within urban areas in the Explanatory Notes in section 7.1 must be doubled (to 50m) and included in the statutory provisions, and or/ referred to in an amended section 7.1.1.
 - b. An additional Riparian Zones map should be produced at a scale appropriate to make decisions at a ‘lot’ scale (i.e. at least 1:25,000).

Statement 14:**5: Strategic issues and options****5.2: Protection of waterways and water quality**

Submissions from agricultural peak bodies and individual producers expressed confusion or concern over the link to the biodiversity policies and how the policies would be implemented. Some landholders were concerned they would be forced to revegetate riparian areas on their property or that the policies would lead to a loss of land through a form of compulsory acquisition, loss of productivity due to moving from cane to trees, or a financial or management burden— management of weeds and pests in riparian areas. Voluntary mechanisms and incentives to encourage farmers to manage remnant vegetation and watercourses were preferred.

(Page 17: FNO2025 Consultation Report)

49. We submit that:
- a. “voluntary mechanisms” and “incentives” which have been used in the past to “encourage farmers to manage remnant vegetation and watercourses” have not resulted in proper and appropriate protection, conservation and management of remnant vegetation and

- watercourses on lots owned by, or under the control of, "farmers"; quite simply, they have not worked; and
- b. a stronger, more prescriptive, approach must be taken to the protection, conservation and management of remnant vegetation and watercourses throughout the FNQ Region, whether on lots owned by, or under the control of, "farmers".

Statement 15:

5: Strategic issues and options

5.3: Provision of industrial land

All submissions that referred to the issue of industrial land supported the policies of the draft regional plan and recognised the need for additional industrial land in Cairns and Innisfail.

What the draft regional plan said

The availability of affordable land often leads to the establishment of new industries. Priority needs to be given to protecting and providing suitable land for future industry to promote economic diversification and growth in FNQ.

(Page 18: FNQ2025 Consultation Report)

50. In response to this statement, we submit that:
 - a. the "new industries" which are established in the FNQ Region:
 - i. do not result in unacceptable adverse impacts on the FNQ natural environment;
 - ii. are environmentally sustainable and responsible, taking into account climate change considerations (including the efficient use of clean, renewable energies);
 - b. clean, renewable energy industries (such as solar energy) are encouraged in the FNQ Region and properly supported (particularly considering that environmentally damaging industries such as coal mining and sugar cane harvesting have benefited from considerable government support over time, and continue to); and
 - c. other environmentally responsible and sustainable industries are encouraged and properly supported (particularly considering that environmentally damaging industries such as coal mining and sugar cane harvesting have benefited from considerable government support over time, and continue to).

Statement 16:**5: Strategic issues and options****5.4: Subdivision and boundary realignments outside the urban footprint**

Regulatory requirements relating to subdivision and boundary realignment was a recurring theme in the submissions received. Thirty per cent of submissions on this issue supported the policy to control urban sprawl and prevent further fragmentation of rural lands. Seventy per cent were opposed to subdivision controls in the draft regional plan. The minimum lot size was considered too large. It was also suggested there is a shortage of rural residential land and controls on boundary realignments are likely to stifle economic diversification especially in rural areas.

(Pages 18: FNQ2025 Consultation Report)

Investigations of land supply within the region demonstrated that there is an adequate supply of rural residential zoned land in the region to meet demand over the next 20 years. The need for a further allocation of rural residential has not been demonstrated at this stage for the life of the plan.

It is therefore not the government's intention to revisit the prohibition on subdivisions below 60 hectares in the Regional Landscape and Rural Production Area.

(Pages 19: FNQ2025 Consultation Report)

51. In response to this statement, we submit that the abundance and availability of "rural residential land" and lack of "controls on boundary realignments" in the past have not delivered the "economic diversification especially in rural areas" referred to, and that the measures proposed in the FNQ2025 Regional Plan in relation to minimum lot sizes be maintained.
52. We therefore support the Queensland Government's intention "not to revisit the prohibition on subdivisions below 60 hectares in the Regional Landscape and Rural Production Area."

Section 2: Specific Questions in Consultation Report

In this Section 2 we have repeated the “Have your say” questions below the relevant heading in Section

5. Strategic issues and options

5.1 Biodiversity conservation

Have your say

- ***Should Far North Queensland’s unique biodiversity be protected through the regional plan?***

Response

Yes

1. Through the experience of the South East Queensland Regional Plan, it has become clear that clear statutory measures are required to halt the continued loss, fragmentation and degradation of critical habitat.
2. In Far North Queensland, history has shown that without the imposition of minimum measures, conditions and requirements to ensure that critical habitat is protected from loss, fragmentation and degradation, local governments will not necessarily take appropriate action to ensure such protection; the voluntary nature of the alternative proposition (i.e. that no statutory measures be put in place) will present a discretion in favour of local governments to depart from proper conservation measures, such a discretion being susceptible to undue and inappropriate influence by vested interests, including from the development industry, and otherwise.
3. Statutory measures must be put in place to ensure that local governments take appropriate steps to ensure protection of critical habitat from loss, fragmentation and degradation, and to ensure that such measures are immune from undue and/or inappropriate influence by vested interests, including from the development industry, and otherwise.
4. EDONQ recommends the development of statutory environmental overlays to ensure the protection of regionally significant wildlife corridors and areas of high ecological significance. The opportunity to develop and impose such overlays has so far been overlooked in the development of the draft FNO2025 and the SP Regulations, even though it has been successfully integrated into other regional planning exercises within Australia and overseas.
5. Areas of “high ecological significance” must be protected from any and all development which will, or is likely to, result in adverse impacts upon those areas and the values they possess. To better

ensure such protection EDONQ recommends, at a minimum, that appropriate declarations be inserted in all existing and new State Planning Policies.

6. Areas of "general ecological significance" must be protected by amending the SP Regulations to require that any and all types of development on land within (either wholly or partially) such areas of "general ecological significance" to be Impact Assessable.
7. State and Local Wildlife Corridors must become a statutory "Conservation" overlay that triggers concurrence with the Queensland Environmental Protection Agency ("EPA").
8. Remove the words from Land Use Policy 1.1.2:

“, or where avoidance is not possible, minimise impacts and then offset residual impacts so there is a net gain of the impacted values ”

9. EDONQ is absolutely opposed to any use whatsoever of Environmental Offsets as a condition to a development approval. Environmental Offsets are nothing more than a licence to commit environmental harm, and have no place in any credible attempt to ensure environmental protection and conservation.
10. **Simply put, if a development would create an impact upon the environment that would, in itself (i.e. without any reference to an environmental offset, whether proposed or not), create or cause an unacceptable environmental impact then any development approval should properly be refused and the proponent forced to develop a proposal which will not cause such impacts in order to obtain any development approval.**
11. Alternatively, in the event that the flawed concept of environmental offsets is pursued and allowed under the FNQ2025 in relation to development applications and approvals, EDONQ recommends the following:
 - a. The focus of any environmental offsets policy should properly be an 'enhancement' of the environment and its values and recognises and reflects the fact that the environment has already been significantly degraded as a result of past human impacts, and that actions are required to reverse the trend.²
 - b. Developers adopt the following hierarchy to avoid and minimise to the greatest extent prior to offsetting:
 - i. Avoid adverse environmental impacts.
 - ii. Where adverse environmental impacts cannot be avoided, such impacts must be minimised through appropriate and

² Western Australia Environmental Protection Authority (2006) *Environmental Offsets. Position Statement No. 9.*

effective mitigation measures.

- iii. 'Environmental offsets' should only be considered only when all steps to avoid and minimise adverse environmental impacts have been taken.
- c. If the above three-step approach does not achieve a net environmental gain then the relevant development should be rejected.
- d. Discretion should be exercised to refuse development proposals where there are unacceptable ecological impacts.
- e. Environmental protection measures to avoid and minimise impacts must be undertaken first and extensively demonstrated by developers e.g. environmental management plans, monitoring, mitigation, environmental audits, etc;
- f. Offset options may be explored to enhance environmental values, only where:
 - i. a comprehensive, transparent, peer reviewed scientific methodology has been approved and used to determine the appropriate offset(s); and
 - ii. the offset(s) will achieve a 'net environmental *gain*' (i.e. environmental values are 'enhanced' rather than simply 'maintained').
- g. Offsets must only be considered after all other options have been exhausted to attempt to:
 - i. Firstly, avoid any adverse environmental impacts; and
 - ii. Secondly, mitigate any adverse environmental impacts which cannot be avoided.
- h. Offsets must not be used in relation to any site, species or ecologically community that has been designated or listed not appropriate for offsetting (e.g. no offsets for 'endangered' or 'of concern' regional ecosystems or local ecosystems). This includes ensuring that offsetting in no way allows development to proceed in areas which it would presently not be able to proceed.
- i. Offsets must be protected in entirety at a level of protection equivalent to Regional Ecosystems or better. Offsets must not be able to offset themselves in the future.
- j. Offset areas can only be used if it is unprotected. However, it must take into consideration the ecosystem being cleared and gain the same level of protection as the area being impacted.
- k. Environmental Offsets must deliver a 'like for like' ecological equivalence and provide greater environmental quality and

quantity. The size of the offset area should be larger than the area to be cleared for development. The offset area must contain the possibility of increasing the habitat and the populations of the affected species.

- I. All offset areas must have detailed:
 - i. Environmental management plans that specify how the offset area will achieve the conditions of “Endangered Regional Ecosystems” (“ERE”) or “Of Concern Regional Ecosystems” (“OCRE”)
 - ii. Assessment to quantify achievement of ERE or OCRE
 - iii. Remedial actions to be undertaken
 - iv. Monitoring and evaluation program
- m. Environmental offsets should only be used to attempt to secure a beneficial environmental outcome (a ‘net environmental gain’ at an absolute minimum), and under no circumstances should any environmental offset be used to facilitate, or attempt to facilitate, a development outcome.
- n. **Environmental offsets must be established *before* any proposed development which may result in an adverse environmental impact is undertaken.**
- o. Re-insert the deleted 1.1.5 in the following form:

“Local governments protect areas of high and general ecological significance (Map 5) within their planning schemes.”
- p. We are concerned about the stark difference in the language which is used in relation to biodiversity conservation and other environmental issues which the FNQ2025 attempts to deal with, and that which is used in relation to infrastructure corridors. The language that is used in relation to environmental conservation and protection measures is predominated by terms such as “minimise”, “where possible” and “offset”, whereas in relation to infrastructure corridors the language is stronger and more certain (e.g. infrastructure corridors are to be “identified, preserved and protected, and where appropriate, proactively acquired and managed”: see section 6.1.2 of the draft FNQ 2025).
- q. We recommend that a similar dedication to action, and the use of stronger terms such as used in relation to infrastructure corridors, be used in relation to environmental protection and conservation measures. Failure to do so will increase the risk that the region will continue to experience widespread loss of remnant vegetation, biodiversity and ecological function, which

will inevitably result in a weakening of all local economies, most particularly tourism and associated services.

- ***Do the draft biodiversity policies require further clarification to make clear they are only intended to apply to urban development and not impact existing agricultural uses?***

Response

No

1. Any new activity, including urban (and tourism) or agricultural must be assessed for its impact on the integrity and function of wildlife corridors and areas of ecological significance.
 2. Indeed, existing agricultural practices which cause unacceptable adverse impacts upon the environment must be phased out or altered over time so that *all* agricultural practices in the future are conducted with protection and conservation of the environment and biodiversity as a core (and compatible) focus.
- ***Are changes needed to the biodiversity maps to separate cleared lands proposed as future conservation corridors from vegetated areas of ecological significance?***

Response

Yes, of course.

5.2 Protection of waterways and water quality

Have your say

- ***Do you think it is important to protect waterways and water quality in Far North Queensland?***

Response

Yes, of course.

1. Waterways and riparian zones provide a number of ecosystems services to the region, upon which all of our local economies (particularly the tourism economy) depend.
2. Protection of waterways and riparian zones in Far North Queensland is absolutely imperative given their importance to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (including its catchments), the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, and the economies they support for Far North Queenslanders.

3. Further, the integrity and security of the region's waterways and water quality is absolutely vital to biodiversity, the health of the environment and critical ecological processes. Protecting and conserving waterways and water quality in Far North Queensland is vitally important to the success of any attempt to protect, conserve and indeed enhance our unique and world-renowned environment, its rich biodiversity and ecological processes which support our lifestyle and economy.
4. Again, without healthy, sustainable, and biologically diverse environments, there will be no healthy and sustainable economy (tourist or otherwise).

- ***Should riparian setbacks continue to be included in the explanatory notes?***

Response

Yes, however:

1. The set-back distances for Riparian Zone widths within urban areas in the Explanatory Notes in section 7.1 must be doubled (to 50m) and included in the statutory provisions, and or/ referred to in an amended section 7.1.1.
2. An additional Riparian Zones map should be produced at a scale appropriate to make decisions at a 'lot' scale (i.e. at least 1:25,000).

- ***Should a new approach to riparian setbacks be considered, which uses a standard formula to identify appropriate and consistent setback widths? The formula would need to take into account a combination of hydrological and environmental factors, including the height of the high bank of the waterway, allowance for increased discharge in a developed catchment, migration of the waterway and wildlife corridor requirements.***

Response

No

1. The set-back distances for Riparian Zone widths within urban areas in the Explanatory Notes in section 7.1 be doubled (to 50m) and included in the statutory provisions, and or/ referred to in an amended section 7.1.1.

- ***Should riparian setback requirements only apply to urban development?***

Response

No

1. Riparian zones perform services for water filtration and for maintaining the health of local and regional biodiversity for the benefit of everyone.
2. Again, without healthy, sustainable, and biologically diverse environments, there will be no healthy and sustainable economy (tourist or otherwise).
3. Therefore, given the vital need for the protection of Riparian Zones, mandatory set-back distances for all development types are required. There are simply no logical, rational or credible arguments for any other approach.

5.3 Provision of industrial land

Have your say

- ***Should the regional plan ensure there is sufficient land for future jobs and employment for Far North Queenslanders?***

Response

Yes

- ***Should the regional plan identify current and future industrial areas more clearly?***

Response

Yes

- ***Should proposed industrial land provisions be strengthened to identify additional areas for investigation as future industrial land?***

Response

Yes

5.4 Subdivision and boundary realignments outside the urban footprint

Have your say

- ***Should the proposed restrictions on boundary realignments be maintained through the regulatory provisions?***

Response

Yes

- ***Should boundary realignments be managed through a combination of regional plan policies and local government regulation?***

Response

No

1. Boundary realignments *must be enforced as binding* throughout the Far North Queensland regional via the regulatory provisions

- ***Should the regional plan allow boundary realignments to facilitate agriculture activities and conservation outcomes?***

Response

Yes, but only if:

1. there is a net gain in conservation and productivity; and
2. there is no net loss of:
 - a. habitat connectivity; or
 - b. acreage of areas of General or High Ecological Significance.

Section 3: Proposed changes to Section 1.1: Biodiversity Conservation in the draft FNQ2025 Regional Plan (“FNQ2025”)

In this Section 3 (similar to Section 1) we have repeated the excerpts which are of concern to use, or have referred to them, in text boxes before providing our submissions to those excerpts in turn.

5: Strategic issues and options

1. Natural environment

Desired regional outcome

The region’s terrestrial and aquatic natural assets, which include the Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Areas, are protected and enhanced, and made resilient to the impacts of climate change.

1. We submit that this Desired Regional Outcome (“DRO”) must be amended:
 - a. To reinsert the terms and concepts of “area”, “function” and “values” of the FNQ Region; and
 - b. To reinsert the term “effectively” before the word “protected”.
2. We otherwise agree with and support the remainder of the proposed amendments to this DRO.
3. In conclusion we submit that this DRO should be amended to read as follows:

“The area, functions and values of region’s terrestrial and aquatic natural assets, which include the Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Areas, are effectively protected and enhanced, and made resilient to the impacts of climate change.”
4. We also agree with and support the inclusion of the phrase “reduce threatening processes” which appears in the final paragraph in the explanation below this DRO and immediately above the heading “1.1 Biodiversity Conservation” as one of the ‘decisive actions’ which is “required”.

5: Strategic issues and options

1. Natural environment

1.1 Biodiversity conservation

Objective

- *Protect, manage and enhance the extent, diversity, condition and connectivity of the region's natural assets to maintain ecological integrity and processes, reverse biodiversity decline and increase resilience to the expected impacts of climate*

5. We submit that this Objective for Biodiversity Conservation must be amended:
 - a. To reinsert the words "maintained and improve" into this "Outcome";
 - b. To reinsert the phrase "biodiversity" as one of the matters which must consequently be 'protected, managed, managed, improved and enhanced' in the FNQ Region; and
 - c. To reinsert the phrase "supporting ecological processes" into this "Outcome".
6. We otherwise agree with and support the remainder of the proposed amendments to this Outcome.
7. In conclusion we submit that this Outcome should be amended to read as follows:

"Protect, manage, maintain, improve and enhance the extent, biodiversity, condition and connectivity of the region's natural assets to maintain ecological integrity and supporting ecological processes, reverse biodiversity decline and increase resilience to the expected impacts of climate."
8. We also agree with and support the inclusion of the phrase "reduce threatening processes" which appears in the final paragraph in the explanation below this DRO and immediately above the heading "1.1 Biodiversity Conservation" as one of the 'decisive actions' which is "required".

5: Strategic issues and options

1. Natural environment

Land Use Policies

9. We are concerned about the insertion of the term "urban development".
10. There is no *definition* proposed for the term "urban development" in the Consultation Report or elsewhere.

11. Only a *description* is offered of what “urban development” may be, and this description is provided in the “Explanatory Notes” this section as follows:

“Urban development is broadly defined and includes any non rural use such as tourism, industrial or infrastructure development.”
12. In those circumstances, it is difficult to offer comprehensive comments or feedback on the proposed amendments to *Land Use Policies*.
13. In addition to the above, we make the following submissions in relation to the proposed amendments to these Land Use Policies.

Land Use Policy 1.1.1

14. We agree that “urban development” (whatever its meaning) is located outside of areas of high ecological significance.
15. However:
 - a. we note that “urban development” does not (and presumably is not intended to) cover all forms of “assessable development”³;
 - b. we submit that all forms of assessable development (as defined by IPA) also be located outside of areas of high ecological significance;
 - c. we submit that there must be a sentence included in this Land Use Policy to deal with overriding public need and development within areas of high ecological significance; and
 - d. we repeat and rely on our previous and current submissions in relation to purported “environmental offsets”;
16. We submit that Land use Policy 1.1.1 be amended as follows:

“1.1.1 ~~Assessable Urban~~ development in the regional landscape and rural production area is located outside of areas of high ecological significance (see map 5). ~~Where there is an overriding need in the public interest for the development it must be designed and operated~~

³ defined under IPA as follows:

“assessable development--

- 1 *Generally, assessable development means development stated in schedule 8, part 1, other than to the extent that part is modified under section 2.5B.63.*
- 2 *The term also includes development declared under a State planning regulatory provision to be assessable development.*
- 3 *For a planning scheme area, the term also includes other development not stated in schedule 8, part 1, but declared to be assessable development under any of the following that applies to the area--*
 - (a) *the planning scheme for the area;*
 - (b) *a temporary local planning instrument;*
 - (c) *a master plan for a declared master planned area;*
 - (d) *a preliminary approval to which section 3.1.6 applies.”*

~~to avoid, or minimise and offset residual impacts so there is no net loss of the impacted ecological values.~~

Assessable development will only be allowed within areas of high ecological significance within the regional landscape and rural production area (see map 5) where both:

(a) there is an overriding need in the public interest for such development; and

(b) such development is designed and constructed to avoid or minimise residual impacts so that there is no net loss of the impacted ecological values."

Land Use Policy 1.1.2

17. Subject to our previous and current submissions in relation to purported environmental offsets, we agree that "urban development" (whatever its meaning) within the urban footprint is to be located, designed and operated in the manner proposed.
18. However:
 - a. we note that "urban development" does not (and presumably is not intended to) cover all forms of "assessable development"⁴;
 - b. we submit that all forms of assessable development (as defined by IPA) be located, designed and operated in the manner proposed.
19. We submit that Land use Policy 1.1.1 be amended to read as follows:

"1.1.2 Assessable development within an urban footprint area that is also within an area of high ecological significance (see map 5) must be designed and operated to avoid, or minimise residual impacts so there is no net loss of the impacted ecological values."

Land Use Policy 1.1.3

20. We agree that "urban development" (whatever its meaning) which is adjacent to areas of high ecological significance (see map 5) must be designed and setback in order to minimise any adverse impacts on the ecological values of those areas.
21. However, we submit that this requirement must be extended to all forms of "assessable development" and not just "urban development" (whatever its meaning may be).
22. Therefore:
 - a. we oppose the proposed amendments to this Land Use Policy; and
 - b. submit that this Land Use Policy be amended to read as follows:

⁴ *Ibid*

"1.1.3 Any and all development adjacent to areas of high ecological significance (see map 5) is designed and setback to minimise any adverse impacts on the ecological values of those areas of high ecological significance."

Land Use Policy 1.1.4

23. We oppose these proposed amendments.
24. However, subject to our previous and current we submit that:
- a. Development (whether urban or otherwise) should avoid areas of general ecological significance where possible; and
 - b. where that is not possible due to an overriding need in the public interest then such development should be located, designed and operated to avoid, or where avoidance is not possible, minimise any impacts on ecological values.
25. We therefore submit that this Land Use Policy must be amended to read as follows:
- "1.1.4 (a) Any and all development avoids areas of general ecological significance (see map 5) is located, designed where possible.*
 - (b) Where that is not possible, any and all development in or abutting areas of general ecological significance (see map 5) is located, designed and operated to avoid, or where avoidance is not possible, minimise any impacts on ecological values."*

Land Use Policy 1.1.5

26. We agree with the proposed addition to this Land Use Policy.
27. However, we oppose the proposed deletion from this Land Use Policy.
28. We therefore submit that this Land Use Policy be amended:
- a. to accept the proposed addition;
 - b. to reject the proposed deletion; and
 - c. to read as follows:
 - "1.1.5 (a) Urban development on a lot that is within the strategic rehabilitation area (see map 5) results in greater ecological connectivity or habitat extent within the subject lot.*
 - (b) Local governments identify and protect areas of high and general ecological significance within their planning schemes."*

Land Use Policy 1.1.6

29. We oppose this proposed Land Use Policy, and in doing so rely on our past and previous submissions in relation to purported environmental offsets (which appear in these submissions).

5: Strategic issues and options

1. Natural environment

Aligned strategies

30. We generally support these proposed amendments, particularly as it converts this section to "Strategies" from "Policies".

31. However, we submit that this section must be amended:

- a. To reinsert the concept of mitigation of the impacts on wildlife corridors "*to improve connectivity and increase resilience of ecological communities*";

- b. To reinsert paragraph 1.1.B:

"1.1.B Wildlife corridors of general ecological significance (see map 5) are rehabilitated to improve connectivity and increase resilience of ecological communities, including to climate change projections."

- c. To reflect that:

- i. These aligned strategies apply to, effect and impact upon any new activities, including urban, tourism and agricultural activities;
- ii. Any new activity, including urban (and tourism) or agricultural must be assessed for its impact on the integrity and function of wildlife corridors and areas of ecological significance.
- iii. Existing agricultural practices which cause unacceptable adverse impacts upon the environment must be phased out or altered over time so that *all* agricultural practices in the future are conducted with protection and conservation of the environment and biodiversity as a core (and compatible) focus.

32. In conclusion we submit that this description of these Aligned Strategies should be amended to read as follows:

"1.1.A Revegetation and ecological rehabilitation programs are prioritised to be undertaken within strategic rehabilitation areas (see map 5) or degraded areas of high ecological significance using local native species in a mix that enhances ecological and habitat function, mitigates the existing impacts on wildlife corridors to improve

connectivity and increase resilience of ecological communities while ensuring that rehabilitation does not cause unacceptable negative impacts negatively impact on neighbouring agricultural use or other development types.

These aligned strategies will apply to, effect and impact upon any new activities, including urban, tourism and agricultural activities.

Any new activity, including urban (and tourism) or agricultural must be assessed for its impact on the integrity and function of wildlife corridors and areas of ecological significance.

Existing agricultural practices which cause unacceptable adverse impacts upon the environment must be phased out or altered over time so that all agricultural practices in the future are conducted with protection and conservation of the environment and biodiversity as a core (and compatible) focus.

1.1.B Wildlife corridors of general ecological significance (see map 5) are rehabilitated to improve connectivity and increase resilience of ecological communities, including to climate change projections."

5: Strategic issues and options

1. Natural environment

Explanatory Notes

33. We generally agree with and support these proposed amendments.
34. However:
- a. we submit that the original (pre-amendment) final sentence of the first paragraph under this heading be reinserted with amendments – we have repeated the original (pre-amendment) final sentence below for ease of reference and convenience;

"Where appropriate, it is possible to maintain or re-establish important wildlife corridors linking the coast to the ranges. This is particularly important when considering the longer-term impacts of climate change, and the need to provide for the migration of critical habitats as climatic conditions change."
 - b. we submit that the amended final sentence of the first paragraph under this heading be amended as follows before being reinserted:

~~"Where appropriate, it is possible to maintain or re-establish~~ important wildlife corridors linking the coast to the ranges must be maintained and re-established throughout the region. This is particularly important when considering the longer-term impacts of climate change, and the need to provide for the migration of critical habitats and species as climatic conditions change.

5: Strategic issues and options

1. Natural environment

Areas to which the policies apply

35. We agree with and support these proposed amendments.

5: Strategic issues and options

1. Natural environment

Areas of high ecological significance

36. We agree with and support these proposed amendments **subject to our submissions in relation to Environmental Offsets.**

5: Strategic issues and options

1. Natural environment

Matters of national environmental significance

37. We agree with and support these proposed amendments.

5: Strategic issues and options

1. Natural environment

Areas of general ecological significance

38. We agree with and support these proposed amendments.

5: Strategic issues and options

1. Natural environment

Strategic rehabilitation areas

39. We agree with and support these proposed amendments subject to our submissions in this document in relation to the voluntary nature of rehabilitation and management programs in relation to vegetation (riparian and otherwise).

5: Strategic issues and options

1. Natural environment

Mapping methodology for areas of ecological significance

40. We agree with and support these proposed amendments.

5: Strategic issues and options

1. Natural environment

Areas of high ecological significance (HES)

41. We agree with and support these proposed amendments.

5: Strategic issues and options

1. Natural environment

Areas of general ecological significance

42. We agree with and support these proposed amendments.

5: Strategic issues and options

1. Natural environment

Strategic Rehabilitation Areas

43. We agree with and support these proposed amendments.

In closing, we would like to thank you and your Government once again for the opportunity to provide submissions on the *FNQ2025 Regional Plan* and the *State Planning Regulatory Provisions (Regional Plans)* ("SP Regulations"). As the SP Regulations are one of the two major mechanisms through which FNQ2025 Regional Plan will be delivered when finalised, it is vitally important to provide the community with the opportunity to provide submissions on them so that the finalised FNQ2025 Regional Plan will have every chance of successfully achieving its goals and delivering its proposed benefits.

We would also like to thank the staff of the Department of Infrastructure and Planning for all of the hard work and commitment they have shown in consulting with relevant stakeholder groups, including the conservation sector, in the development of the draft FNQ2025 and the draft SP Regulations. DIP staff have often done so within very tight timetables for consultation, and we very much appreciate all of the assistance, guidance and opportunity which they have provided to the conservation sector throughout that process, including this office.

EDONQ sincerely looks forward to the release, implementation and delivery of the finalised *FNQ2025 Regional Plan* and *State Planning Regulatory Provisions (Regional Plans)* within the FNQ region.

EDONQ also looks forward to working with all relevant stakeholders, including State and local government, in the future and throughout the life of the FNQ2025, to best ensure that the FNQ2025 Regional Planning package (including the SP Regulations and relevant provisions of IPA) help achieve ecologically sustainable development outcomes for the FNQ region as is their intent, by establishing and maintaining strong and sustainable environments, economies and communities in the FNQ region for the benefit of all.

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