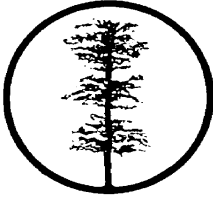


ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDER'S OFFICE OF NORTHERN QUEENSLAND INC. and  
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7 May 2010

**VIA EMAIL** ([greenspace@dip.qld.gov.au](mailto:greenspace@dip.qld.gov.au))

Resource and Landscape Planning  
Department of Infrastructure and  
Planning  
PO Box 15009  
City East QLD 4002

**Re: Draft Greenspace Strategy Feedback**

Dear Sir/Madam

The Environmental Defenders Office (Qld) Inc. ("EDO (Qld)") and Environmental Defender's Office of Northern Queensland Inc. ("EDO-NQ") (collectively, "Queensland EDOs") offer the following submissions in response to the draft Queensland Greenspace Strategy ("Strategy"), released for public comment on 23 March 2010.

As small community legal centres that specialise in public interest environmental law in Queensland, the Queensland EDOs have a particular appreciation for matters related to the protection, conservation and enhancement of the state's rich environment and unique ecosystems, as well as the promotion of public access and enjoyment of at least some of this environment. We appreciate the opportunity to submit brief comments on the draft Strategy, suggesting priorities for draft actions proposed by the state government and also offering several additional suggested planning actions or measures targeted at implementing the draft Strategy's target of protecting 50% more land for nature conservation and public recreation by 2020. In accordance with the 23 March 2010 release, the Queensland EDOs' submission is structured under the headings of the state's supplied submission form.

We wish to emphasise that in order to provide sufficient and appropriate land for conservation and recreation:

- Queensland must stabilise its population growth to sustainable levels;
- the purpose and priorities of green space land (ie, recreation or conservation) must be clearly identified and protected by binding mechanisms;
- the target for national parks needs to be appropriately 15% of Queensland, as proposed by the Queensland Conservation Council;
- the Greenspace strategy needs to be integrated into a Statewide biodiversity strategy; and
- a detailed funding program is required to implement the strategy.

**I. Draft Action 1: Promote Additional Green Space.**

**Suggested Priority: Very High**

Identifying and reserving additional green space for conservation and public recreation should be given a very high priority in the Strategy since, as noted in the draft released for public comment, Queensland currently has insufficient green space currently, particularly in Southeast Queensland (“SEQ”), while at the same time the state is projected to experience a significant increase in population by 2051. Thus, the state starts from a green space deficit yet faces greater demand for green space going forward. The state government’s target of protecting 50% more land for nature conservation and public recreation by 2020 is therefore not only ambitious, but essential if the pressure exerted by a growing population for access to such lands is to be relieved. Moreover, while the 50% by 2020 goal is laudable, clearly the state’s population will continue to increase after that point in time, warranting continued effort to secure more green space beyond 2020. The Queensland EDOs urge the state to not only pursue its 2020 target of 50% more green space, but to begin planning to promote additional green space for conservation and recreation in later years.

**II. Draft Action 2: Introduce Better Planning Processes, Tools and Instruments to Increase Green Space.**

**Suggested Priority: Medium**

The Queensland EDOs believe that local governments, in conjunction with state officials and with the benefit of state planning policies promoting additional green space, currently have sufficient planning processes, tools and instruments at hand to increase green space. To the extent the state believes that local governments require additional guidance, the Queensland EDOs suggest that the state consider taking action to ensure that green space planning and allocation strategies are not subordinate legislation.

**A. Draft Action 2.1: How do you rate using Green Space Network Plans for achieving Draft Action 2.**

**Suggested Priority: Medium**

**B. Draft Action 2.2: How do you rate introducing legislative changes for achieving Draft Action 2.**

**Suggested Priority: High**

**III. Draft Action 3: Remove Arbitrary Barriers That Limit Public Access to State-Owned Land.**

**Suggested Priority: Medium**

While increasing access to state-owned land for public recreation is a laudable goal, the Queensland EDOs believe that the notion of “removing arbitrary barriers” needs to be better developed. Precisely what constitutes an “arbitrary” barrier is not particularly well-defined. Certainly, the protection and

conservation of valuable or sensitive species of flora or fauna warrants limiting public access and should not be considered an “arbitrary” barrier to such access. Similarly, the Strategy needs to provide a rational, ecologically sound basis upon which state-owned land is made accessible for recreation or set aside primarily for conservation with limited public access. Both these issues need to be addressed in considerably more detail going forward and the Queensland EDOs look forward to working with the state in this endeavour.

**A. Draft Action 3.1: How do you rate establishing a register of all government land for achieving Draft Action 3.**

**Suggested Priority: Medium**

The Queensland EDOs suggest that the ecological considerations outlined above for the protection and conservation of sensitive flora and fauna should be addressed in conjunction with the register proposed in the draft Strategy. Thus the register proposed would not only identify government land that should be considered for public access, but should also identify the ecological bases upon which public access to a particular property or portion thereof should be limited, or even prohibited, for nature conservation.

**B. Draft Action 3.2: How do you rate setting up a pilot project allowing public access by community organisations to school playing fields after hours for achieving Draft Action 3.**

**Suggested Priority: Low**

**IV. Draft Action 4: Encourage Recreation Opportunities on Private Land.**

**Suggested Priority: High**

In light of the recognized deficit in public green space in Queensland at present, particularly in SEQ, the Queensland EDOs believe that the state should look to private land – and landowners – as a key source of increased access to public green space, at least in the near future. Local governments, through the local planning process, need to be integrated into the process by which recreation opportunities on private land within their jurisdictions are promoted.

**V. Draft Action 5: Investigate the Potential to Use Surplus State-Owned Land as Green Space.**

**Suggested Priority: High**

The Queensland EDOs see this draft action as interconnected with Draft Action 1, which seeks to increase the overall amount of green space available for nature conservation and public recreation. Clearly surplus state-owned land would be a significant source of land available for use as green space. However, as with the notion of “arbitrary” barriers to public access, precisely what constitutes “surplus” state-owned land needs more conceptual development. The Queensland EDOs would not, for example, see state-owned land that is important habitat for vulnerable or ecologically-unique species of plants or

animals but which is not presently used by the state as being "surplus," at least insofar as the term implies "excess" or "beyond that which is necessary."

**Conclusion**

The Queensland EDOs appreciate the opportunity to submit these brief comments in response to the draft Strategy and look forward to further opportunities to assist the state government in pursuing the ambitious goals set forth therein.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Patrick Pearleman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

PATRICK W. PEARLMAN  
Environmental Defender's Office of  
Northern Queensland Inc.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jo-Anne Bragg". The signature is written in a simple, slightly cursive style.

JO-ANNE BRAGG  
Principal Solicitor  
Environmental Defenders Office (Qld)  
Inc.