



## **ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDERS OFFICE (QLD) INC.**

30 Hardgrave Road  
West End QLD 4101

Telephone: (07) 3211 4466  
Facsimile: (07) 3211 4655  
E-mail: [edoqld@edo.org.au](mailto:edoqld@edo.org.au)  
[www.edo.org.au/edoqld](http://www.edo.org.au/edoqld)  
ABN 14 911 812 589

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Draft Rural Futures Strategy  
Department of Infrastructure and Planning  
PO Box 15009 City East Qld 4002  
By email to: [ruralfutures@dip.qld.gov.au](mailto:ruralfutures@dip.qld.gov.au)

Dear Sir/Madam,

### **EDO comments on Draft SEQ Rural Futures Strategy**

The EDO Qld is a non-profit community legal centre specialising in public interest planning and environmental law. Our goal is to protect and enhance the environment in the public interest through use of the law, by and on behalf of the community.

EDO Qld is active on law reform, especially in relation to the SEQ Regional Plan, and welcomes the opportunity to briefly comment on the environmental aspects of the *Draft SEQ Rural Futures Strategy*.

EDO Qld supports the suggested actions for Economic development: Climate and energy challenges; Healthy and Productive rural landscapes: Rural land management, Healthy waterways and Environmental stewardship and ecosystem services; Water resources: Coordination of water management (though a greater focus on water for environmental flows is required) and Water use efficiency; and Community development: Community-based transport.

However the following additional issues should be addressed and have associated 'actions' included within the SEQ Rural Futures Strategy:

1. A full and proper assessment of the ecologically sustainable carrying capacity of the SEQ region. The basis of the SEQ Rural Futures Strategy must be achieving ecologically sustainable development. The projected population growth, horticultural development and increase in intensive primary production must be considered as elements in achieving that goal and priority can not be given to these other factors at the expense of the environmental and social components of sustainability.
2. The SEQ Region must be assessed and the SEQ Rural Futures Strategy must not provide for development beyond the ecologically sustainable carrying capacity of the area. In particular, the assessment of carrying capacity must include an assessment of water availability; infrastructure capacity; and natural resources so that no further flora or fauna becomes threatened, endangered or extinct in SEQ. The carrying capacity of SEQ Region must be assessed based on the future climate change scenarios such as extreme weather conditions and drought.
3. Population projections should not be used as planning targets or requirements at regional and local levels. The success of the SEQ Rural Futures Strategy and local plans must not be assessed against population targets. Rather, the target for planning at the regional and local levels must be to achieve ecological sustainability.

4. Climate change must be central to the SEQ Rural Futures Strategy. Climate change should be considered not just in terms of adaptation, but also in terms of mitigation – regional planning designed at reducing Queensland’s emissions. The region’s carbon footprint should be identified and included.
5. The EDO Qld strongly supports assistance for primary producers in adapting their practices to climate change. This should include research into, and assistance to develop, climate-appropriate crops and water efficient farming technologies and practices. The SEQ Rural Futures Strategy should also encourage new industries, such as solar or wind farms, especially on farmland which has become marginal due to the drought and climate change.
6. The EDO Qld strongly supports encouraging primary producers to participate in carbon trading. The carbon stored in existing remnant and regrowth vegetation should be calculated, and government extension programs should promote the adoption of organic farming practices which sequester greater amounts of carbon in soil. EDO Qld supports the Environmental Stewardship Program where landholders are paid for implementing management practices which exceed statutory management obligations.
7. Provision must be made for the protection of high conservation value regrowth, riparian regrowth, and other regrowth with significant carbon stores through amendments to the *Vegetation Management Act 1999* and actions in the SEQ Rural Futures Strategy. Landholders should be supported to retain regrowth vegetation through payments to recognise the carbon stored in the vegetation.
8. Local food production and good quality agricultural land in SEQ must be protected from new mines, dams, and tourism developments which are real threats. Food labelling stating region of origin and the total greenhouse gas emissions created in the production of the item should be mandated.
9. The government should plan for a diverse range of housing needs and provide housing that ensures real affordability rather than simply increased supply. Housing affordability must not be used to justify overdevelopment at the expense of ecological sustainability.
10. More focus should be given to the threats to the natural environment, especially biodiversity, from potentially harmful pest, diseases and contaminants. Threats from pests and diseases will only increase with climate change yet the draft Strategy does not propose any plans for mitigation of climate change, nor does it propose any linkages to existing government climate change or Biosecurity policies. The SEQ Rural Futures Strategy should build on, and improve, the draft Biosecurity Strategy and ClimateSmart 2050 following its review.
11. The EDO Qld minimising biosecurity risks through engagement with land managers and building Biosecurity Queensland’s capacity to provide outreach services to all landholders. We support high government investment in both prevention and response to biosecurity threats, particularly in relation to threats to biodiversity and the natural environment from weeds and pests.
12. The EDO Qld and representatives from the community and environment sectors should be included as key stakeholders and consulted throughout the review and development of the supporting Action Plan.

13. The following must be supported and co-delivered through the SEQ Rural Futures Strategy:
- i. The Actions within the Healthy Waterways Strategy 2007-2012, incorporating the findings and recommendations of the Healthy Waterways Partnership, 2007;
  - ii. The SEQ Natural Resource Management Plan Resource Condition Targets;
  - iii. The findings and recommendations of the State of the Region Report, 2008;
  - iv. SEQ Constraint mapping;
  - v. SEQ Catchments Ecosystem services mapping;
  - vi. Significant and regional biodiversity and wildlife corridors must be fully protected;
  - vii. The remaining habitat of Endangered and Vulnerable species must be fully protected;
  - viii. Targets for public transport use and green energy use;
  - ix. More open space and recreational land, at the regional and local levels, but not at the expense of national parks or land for conservation.

The EDO Qld acknowledges the assistance of volunteer Bruce Wells in preparing this submission. Please do not hesitate to contact EDO Qld to discuss this submission.

Yours faithfully

Environmental Defenders Office (Qld) Inc.



Larissa Waters  
Solicitor

*To provide feedback on EDO services, write to us at the above address.*