

Respect and manage our natural assets

Our region's world-renowned natural assets, natural resources and environment are key factors in the economic success of the region. The region includes two World Heritage listed areas, the rainforests of the Wet Tropics and the reefs and waters of the Great Barrier Reef (GBR). To the west we have the Gulf Rivers Strategic areas and to the north Cape York Peninsula.

As a region we are the custodians of two international assets. As a result, our communities face higher human resource and infrastructure costs (i.e. roads, water, sewer, waste etc.) to protect these assets, on the contrary the economic success of our natural assets is evidenced by the growth in our largest industry, tourism, which is valued at over \$3.2 billion dollars. This is in addition to the contributions from the region's growing global reputation in primary industries, education, health, marine and aviation.

Respecting our natural assets and upholding the integrity of the areas unique bioregions is important for the sustainable economic growth and development of FNQ. A changing climate and land use impacts on water quality are recognised as major threats to the region's natural assets.

The diverse FNQ environment faces a range of pressures including invasive species, changes in climate, land-clearing and fragmentation. This includes the world-renowned GBR, with our changing climate considered to be one of the greatest threats to its health. Further deterioration of the region's natural assets will threaten the tourism industry and the economic prosperity of the region.

Councils recognise that healthy, resilient ecosystems are essential for sustainable economic growth and healthy communities. Post COVID-19 there is a greater public appreciation of and demand for green spaces. A collaborative approach between local government, the State and Federal governments and industry is essential in ensuring the value of our natural assets and environment is retained now and into the future to support ongoing economic growth.

The FNQ region is well positioned to supply local and global markets with innovative emerging industries which harness the region's natural assets, knowledge and partnerships including renewable energy, environmental management and Indigenous knowledge.

Respecting and managing the region's natural assets and the environment will assist sustainable economic growth and development in the region. Improving the water quality and managing the effects of a changing climate will offer some protection to the estimated 69,000 related (tourism, recreation, commercial fishing and scientific research) jobs which depend on healthy waters in a sustainable ecosystem.

By deploying and implementing a combination of strategies to protect natural assets the region will be able to prosper and grow. Strategies such as:

- **Regional Strategic Waste and Materials Recovery Framework,**
- **Investing in renewable energy which will stimulate employment, innovation and offer a sustainable energy source for future generations.**
- **Reducing excess nutrients, sediments and pesticides and other pollutants will improve water quality.**
- **Coastal Hazard Adaptation Strategies, and**
- **Concept refinement and development of the Smart Green Economy.**

