

20 November 2019



**Environment  
Institute of  
Australia and  
New Zealand**  
SOUTH EAST QLD DIVISION

The Honourable Cameron Dick MP  
Minister for State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning  
C:\ Draft North Queensland Regional Plan Feedback  
Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning  
PO Box 5666  
Townsville QLD 4810  
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Dear Minister,

### **Submission: Draft North Queensland Regional Plan (the draft Plan)**

Thank you for providing an opportunity for the Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand South East Queensland Division (EIANZ SEQ) to make a submission on behalf of EIANZ SEQ and EIANZ Far North Queensland Divisions regarding the draft North Queensland Regional Plan.

The EIANZ is a non-profit, multi-disciplinary association of environmental practitioners. Its membership is represented by a diverse range of technical disciplines including scientists (e.g., ecological consultants), policy makers, engineers, lawyers and economists. We advocate for environmental knowledge and awareness, advancing ethical and competent environmental practice.

The EIANZ SEQ recommends that the following occurs in finalising the draft Plan:

**Recommendation 1:** That the draft Plan be revised to adequately account for the impacts likely to occur in north Queensland due to a rapidly warming climate.

**Recommendation 2:** That the draft Plan be revised to recognise that strengthening social-ecological connectedness is essential for building the resilience of the north Queensland community.

**Recommendation 3:** That the draft Plan be revised to resolve policy dissonance with other Queensland Government environment policies.

### **Impacts of a warming climate**

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C<sup>1</sup> provides clear guidance on the climate-related risks for natural and human systems with global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. Whilst the risks depend on the magnitude and rate of warming, Queensland is already experiencing climate driven impacts including:

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1 IPCC, 2018: Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty [Masson-Delmotte, V., P. Zhai, H.-O. Pörtner, D. Roberts, J. Skea, P.R. Shukla, A. Pirani, W. Moufouma-Okia, C. Péan, R. Pidcock, S. Connors, J.B.R. Matthews, Y. Chen, X. Zhou, M.I. Gomis, E. Lonnoy, T. Maycock, M. Tignor, and T. Waterfield (eds.)]. In Press.

- increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, including drought, flooding and cyclones;
- increased frequency and intensity of bushfires;
- increased frequency and intensity of coral bleaching;
- sea-level rise; and
- extinction of vulnerable species (the Bramble Cay melomys).

Whilst the draft Plan includes a brief section on climate change, a more thorough analysis and synthesis of the risks and impacts of a changing climate should be the context in which the draft Plan is set. Sustainable and responsible planning must include a rigorous and thorough assessment of the drivers and pressures north Queensland is likely to experience over and beyond the life of the plan.

## Socio-ecological systems

The idea of a social-ecological systems framework was first used by Berkes and Folke<sup>2</sup> in 1998 to analyse resilience in local resource management systems, recognising that humans and nature are strongly interlinked. The Stockholm Resilience Centre refers to “complex adaptive systems”, noting there are virtually no ecosystems that are not shaped by people and no people without the need for ecosystems and the services they provide<sup>3</sup>.

The draft Plan must consider the loss of environmental function and services that form the basis of economic opportunities in north Queensland and give guidance on innovative adaptation pathways to deliver long-term ecologically sustainable development. The draft Plan should aim to strengthen the adaptive capacity of the region to a changing climate, create pathways for behavior change, and identify and plan for the emerging social issues that will result from impacted environmental and heritage values.

## Policy dissonance

As noted on page 63 of the in the draft Plan, the north Queensland region contains terrestrial and marine environments of national and international significance. As such the draft Plan should clearly demonstrate how it operates within the context of the Queensland Government’s other policy frameworks.

The Queensland Government’s Climate Change Response outlines the Government’s commitments to transition to a low carbon, clean growth economy and adapt to the impacts of a changing climate. Whilst the draft Plan refers to climate change and the need to support growth of the renewable energy sector in the region, there is no clear alignment to the Queensland Government’s three key climate change commitments:

1. Powering Queensland with 50% renewable energy by 2030.
2. Doing our fair share in the global effort to arrest damaging climate change by achieving zero net emissions by 2050.
3. Demonstrating our commitment to reducing carbon pollution by setting an interim emissions reductions target of at least 30% below 2005 levels by 2030.

Similarly, the draft Plan does not demonstrate clear alignment to Queensland’s Implementation Plan for the joint Australian and Queensland Governments Reef 2050 Plan Cumulative Impact Management Policy. Four of the five regions covered under the draft Plan are adjacent to, or within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area that is under threat from risks associated with climate change, coastal development and illegal use<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Berkes, F., and C. Folke, editors. 1998. Linking social and ecological systems: management practices and social mechanisms for building resilience. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.

<sup>3</sup> Stockholm Resilience Centre (n.d.) <https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/research-videos/2017-11-27-understanding-social-ecological-systems.html>

<sup>4</sup> Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority 2014, Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2014, GBRMPA, Townsville.

This planning approach provides the opportunity for the Queensland Government to set a blue print that provides for functioning regional economies and communities, within current and emerging environmental and resilience contexts.

The EIANZ SEQ thanks you for the opportunity to make a submission regarding the draft North Queensland Regional Plan and would be pleased to discuss these matters further with officers as they finalise the draft Plan.

Yours Sincerely



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Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand Inc.

