

# Strategic Plan 2013-2015



SUNSHINE COAST  
Environment Council



## Introduction

SCEC is the peak environmental advocacy group on the Sunshine Coast. Established in 1980 it represents over 40 community groups (with a combined membership of more than 5,000 individuals) working on environmental protection and conservation.

***Our vision:*** *An ecologically sustainable world achieved through individual and community stewardship of the natural environment at local, regional and global level.*

***Our mission:*** *Through leadership, education and environmental activism, to encourage Sunshine Coast individuals and communities to support and participate in working towards the goal of environmental sustainability.*

## Our operating environment

The Sunshine Coast region is a beautiful place with a mosaic of landscapes and seascapes. It has a diverse geology and a wide variety of climate creating a rich diversity of flora and fauna species. Off shore the meeting of warm currents from the north and colder current from the south create an equally rich marine environment.

The Queensland Herbarium recognises 84 different regional ecosystems on the Sunshine Coast (31 are under threat). These offer habitat to over 800 fauna species (68 are under threat) and over 1600 flora and fungi species (91 are under threat). The Sunshine Coast is at the northern or southern extremity of the distribution of many of these species and several are endemic to the Sunshine Coast.

This natural treasure chest is under pressure from a variety of threats including:

- **Urbanisation** – the population of the Sunshine Coast has increased from just over 26,000 in 1947 to more than 306,000 in 2011. To house this number of people much of the coastal zone has been cleared to make way for urban sprawl. Across the region vegetated areas have been dissected by roads, power lines and other infrastructure to support the Sunshine Coast community.
- **Non-urban land uses** – large areas of vegetation have been cleared to make room for agriculture and pine plantations and many of the regions forests have been logged at some point during the past 150 years. Although land clearing has not been a major threat in the past decade, recent changes to the vegetation management act may mean this issue will become more prominent once again.
- **Land management practices** – Almost 60% of the land in the region is under active human management. The way in which these areas are managed has a major impact on the environment. Poor land management practices have been a major contributor to environmental degradation in the past.
- **Climate Change** – The Australian Climate Commission predicts a 4° - 6° increase in average temperature on the Sunshine Coast by 2100. It is unlikely that much of the native vegetation will be able to survive such a dramatic change in temperature. Most of the regions flora and fauna will therefore be lost unless the impacts of climate change are significantly reduced.
- **Invasive species** – Introduced species such as the water hyacinth, lantana, cane toad and foxes are posing a major threat to native flora and fauna. As these organisms do not recognise National Park Boundaries they pose a threat to protected areas as well as unprotected areas.

Notwithstanding the significant losses of habitat that have occurred in the past 100+ years the region is relatively fortunate to also have significant areas of remnant vegetation relatively intact covering around 42% of the region.

Environmental issues are no longer the exclusive concerns of a minority 'on the fringes of society' but are established and accepted parts of the community political agenda (even if they are still often poorly understood).

Progress has been made in the area of land management including the development of best practice management initiatives for various agriculture sectors and sediment erosion controls on development sites.

## **Our role in the region**

Preserving the environment in the face of this mosaic of threats requires a great diversity of skills and expertise. The Sunshine Coast region is blessed to have a large number of highly professional community groups working on environmental issues (the majority of which are member groups of SCEC).

Among these groups are a number of Landcare and Waterwatch organisations that have developed great expertise in the fields of natural resource and catchment management. They are the key organisations working on the ground on rehabilitation, preservation, land management and invasive species.

SCECs role in the region is to support these groups by providing a political voice for the environment, advocating for policy settings that avoid further threats to the environment and create an enabling environment for SCEC member groups to carry out their work. The latter focusses both on policy settings and on attitude and understanding in the wider community.

SCECs activities, therefore, focus on environmental advocacy and lobbying as well as community education.

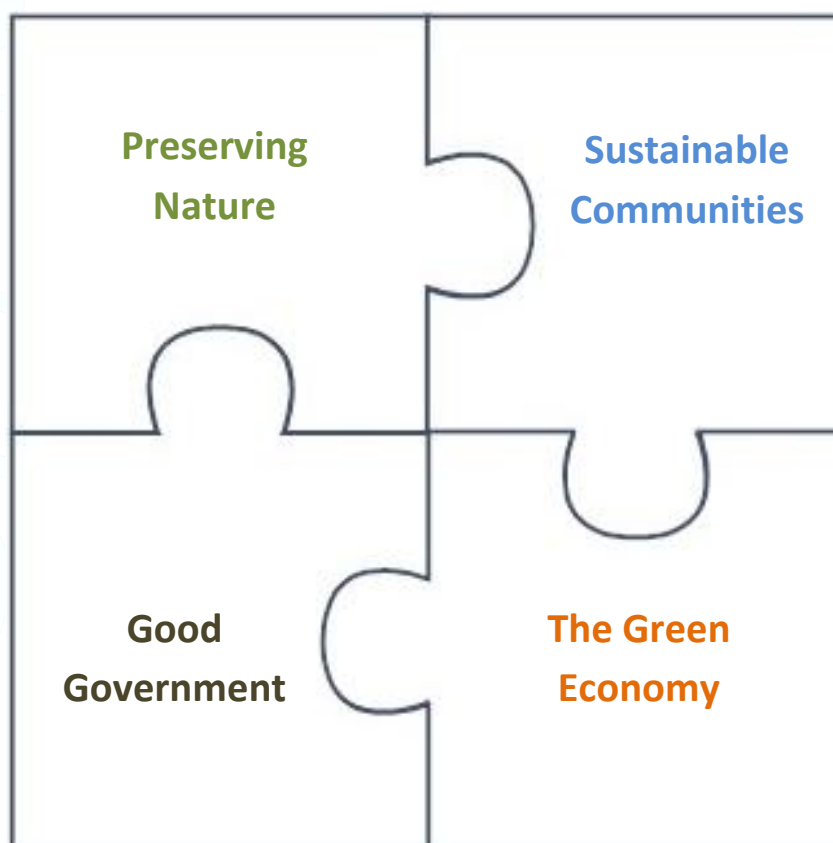
## Strategic Areas

SCEC recognises that modern human societies – with all the technological, health care and other comforts we all enjoy – will always impact on the natural environment. Without natural inputs there are no raw materials from which to create the goods & services that support a modern lifestyle.

However, we also recognise that without caring for the environment the ongoing demand made of this environment will erode its capacity to supply these materials and therefore, erode our ability to enjoy that lifestyle.

SCEC recognises that long term enjoyment of a modern lifestyle requires sustainable use of natural resources which in turn requires careful management and conservation of the natural environment.

Based on this realisation SCEC has identified the following four strategic areas in which action will be required in order to secure long term protection of the natural environment in our region. SCEC will be engaged in activities across all four areas.





**Preserving nature : SCEC works to promote an understanding of and an appreciation for, the unique values of our region's natural environment.**

Remaining natural areas need to be preserved and protected. A network of connected conservation areas needs to be established covering suitable habitat for all plants and animals. This allows for movement of species across the landscape. Ecosystems currently under threat should be expanded in area to the point where they are no longer threatened.

**Good government: SCEC works with local, state and national governments to advocate for effective environmental legislation.**

Governments at all levels need to develop policies and laws that support environmental restoration and avoid environmental harm. Planning for environmental protection needs to occur across all areas of government. Natural resource management, energy, water, town planning, transport and waste are key areas.

**Sustainable communities: SCEC works to increase awareness of the environmental impacts of our lifestyle and to promote simple ways of reducing our impacts without compromising our quality of life.**

People are the final consumers of all the things our society produces. We must all understand how the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the energy we use and everything else that we do impacts on the environment. We need to become critical consumers and actors and choose those products and activities that do not harm the environment.

**Green Economy: SCEC works to help establish an economy that produces the products we want without damaging the environment.**

The global economy is running into the limits of what the earth can supply. Within a generation we will run out of key materials such as oil, phosphorous and a number of minerals. We are rapidly clearing forests and exhausting fish stocks while our carbon emissions are warming the planet. We need to transform the economic system to be powered by renewable energy, to create a cyclic flow of materials and to avoid putting even more polluting substances in our land, waterways and atmosphere.

# SCEC Strategic Plan 2013-2015

## Structure of the plan

The SCEC Plan 2013-2015 consists of this strategic plan and an operating plan. The strategic plan sets out the higher level vision that underpins our activities and creates the overarching structure of the management and organisation of our work.

The operating plan sets out the detail of individual projects and campaigns. It consists of a series of individual project/campaign sheets that document the issue that is being addressed, the objective and methodology used to address the issue and a record of work undertaken to date.

The strategic plan will remain in force until its review in 2015. The operating plan is a living document that provides a snapshot overview of all current activity of the organisation.



**Strategic areas** represent the core areas across which SCEC needs to be active in order to achieve its vision.

**Programs** are an overarching level of organisation of SCEC campaigns, projects and activities – each has a specific focus as outlined below.

**Projects & Campaigns** are a set of activities that SCEC engages in to achieve an outcome, projects are ongoing (e.g. community education) whereas campaigns have a clear deadline ('hilltop by sunrise')

**Activities** are the individual action taken in the course of a project or campaign (such as delivering a series of library presentations)

## Programs

- **Landscapes & Ecosystems (Preserving Nature)**

Preserving Ecosystems focuses on the protection, preservation and restoration of ecosystems, ecological processes and connectivity at the regional and inter regional scale recognising that effective conservation requires planning and policy to consider issues at the landscape scale with a 100 year plus horizon.

SCEC will help set the agenda around these issues and be actively involved in associated planning processes. Examples of issues that fall under this program are coastal protection and the impacts of climate change, the establishment of a connected network of conservation areas and the development of catchment management plans.

- **Planning issues (Good Government)**

Planning issues focuses on development issues in the region. This includes proposed and future urban, commercial and industrial development as well as roads & infrastructure. It also includes the development and review of planning instruments and legislation at the local, state and national level that establish the framework for assessing development applications.

SCEC will actively monitor development proposals in the region make submission as required for the protection of natural areas from being negatively impacted upon by development or land use change. SCEC will actively engage in the preparation and review of planning instruments in particular the SEQ Regional Plan and the Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme and the review of relevant legislation such as the *Sustainable Planning Act*, the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* and the *Building Code of Australia*.

- **Know your impacts (Sustainable Communities)**

Know your impacts focuses on informing Sunshine Coast residents about the environmental impacts of their everyday activity and the goods and services they consume with a view to reducing those impacts. Most people know that their electricity use causes carbon emissions and that long showers waste water. But few people consider the water footprint of their clothes or the carbon footprint of their diet yet our indirect impacts (products we purchase) often far outweigh our direct impacts (things we do in the home) and offer much greater opportunities to reduce our impacts without compromising quality of life.

SCEC will research the impacts of different goods, services and activities and develop a range of community education tools (including brochures, websites, presentations and events) to increase awareness of the relative impacts of different parts of our lives. SCEC will promote goods, services and activities that have a demonstrably lower impact on the environment seeking to empower people to make alternate choices that suit their preferences but reduce their impacts.

- **Change agent (Green Economy)**

Change agent focusses on creating structural change in industries that are impacting on the environment in the region. There are sound sustainable practices and technologies available



for virtually every major industry but their uptake is often hampered by poor integration of planning, an obstructive regulatory environment and an all too human fear of change. Working with academics and professionals working in these fields SCEC will seek to facilitate the adoption of more integrated planning and the deployment of sustainable technologies by key stakeholders including utilities, local and state government, the development industry and major players in the local economy such as the Sunshine Coast Airport and Plaza, the University Hospital, RDA, SCE etc.

- **SCEC Resourcing & Communication**

As the name suggests resourcing SCEC focusses on delivering the resource base (financial and otherwise) that the association requires in order to deliver its vision. Most important among these activities are maintaining strong and effective relations with our member groups and other organisations in the conservation sector, maintaining an active membership base and engendering and responding to broad community support. Activities under this program will include ones focussing on community engagement and events, the development of independent revenue streams, liaison and collaboration across the conservation sector, a clear and effective media presence and the development and maintenance of sound administrative and governance systems including management of our online presence.

## Projects & Campaigns

Projects and campaigns are where the 'rubber hits the road' for SCEC. At any one time there will be dozens of possible projects and campaigns SCEC could be involved in. With limited resources at our disposal identifying those projects & campaigns that are most likely to create effective environmental outcomes is crucial.

In selecting projects & campaign SCEC will consider the following matters:

- What do our members want us to be involved in
  - Local issues
  - Regional advocacy role
- What issues pose the greatest risk to our environment
  - This will also be informed by whether the issue is already dealt with by another organisation
- What do we have the resources to do
  - Recognising that some activities can support revenue generation either direct cash revenue or in kind revenue by increasing support and volunteer base

The responsibility for selecting projects & campaigns rests with the management committee. Staff will prepare a project sheet for consideration by management committee when they become aware of an issue that SCEC might want to be involved in. The project sheet will set out:

- the program the project sits under
- the issue that is being addressed
- the objective of the project
- the methodology for achieving this objective
- partners for the project (in particular SCEC member groups)
- the expected timeframe, budget and resources requirements of the project

If management committee decides to become involved in a project or campaign the project sheet will also be used to keep a record of activity and progress on the project and to report back to the management committee.