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STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT REPORTING



SOCIAL
ECONOMIC
ECOLOGICAL



Biodiversity

The Johnstone Shire is part of the Wet Tropics Bioregion of Queensland. It is home to a large but unknown number of flora and fauna species, a significant proportion of which are rare or threatened. Some key species are under significant conservation effort. The biodiversity of the area is subject to number of different types of threats, with protected areas sustaining large areas of ecosystems, but not including all ecosystem types equally.

Recommendations include further studies and description of the Shire's biodiversity, restoration of strategic areas and ecosystem types, improved management of natural areas, continued species conservation efforts, control of introduced plants and animals, and reducing human impacts to natural ecosystems.



Land Management

Shire planning has determined appropriate locations for future development of land use in the Shire. Outside of natural areas, most of the Shire's land use is for agriculture. Land management practices determine the sustainability of future production from soils, determine the costs of production, and determine the impact of agriculture to the Shire's waterways and atmosphere. Nutrients, sediments, and pesticides are currently affecting the Shire's waterways. Work to resolve this issue has progressed in recent years, with improved land management practices available, and being adopted over time by landholders. Economic pressures have had some impact upon the rate of adoption. Pest animals and plants are another issue affecting the productivity of land.

Recommendations include updating information to describe the various land uses in the Shire, controlling pests, and that landholders continue to adopt improved land management practices as they become available.

Water and Atmosphere

Ground, fresh, tidal, estuarine and coastal waters are valuable assets, contributing to the maintenance of many industries and natural resources. The Shire's water bodies are shown to be affected by various types of pollution. Whilst overall water quality is reasonable, evidence suggests that our aquatic ecosystems are under pressure, and likely to be surviving at a suboptimal level. Water quantity can also be an issue in the dry season, with water extraction affecting some of the Shire's smaller waterways.

Waste disposal and landfills are managed to best possible practice. The Innisfail sewage plant and sewage system presently release significant nutrients to the river and coastal waters. Energy usage and atmospheric pollution in the Shire contribute to widespread global effects.

Recommendations include establishing water monitoring to detect improvement or changes, managing water utilisation, improving sewage treatment, and reducing energy usage.



Community and Heritage

Significant factors affect the Shire's community, including an aging population, migration of young adults, and a high level of socio-economic disadvantage. A lack of rental housing has become a recent issue. The Shire's crime rates vary in comparison to Queensland averages. The community services offer support and have shifted to a proactive approach towards caring for the community.

The Shire is highly multicultural and also comprises a strong traditional owner community—some issues affect various cultural groups, disproportionate to their occurrence across the rest of the Shire's population.

Awareness of heritage values in the Shire has grown. Cultural events have also flowered. Economic pressures still affect the

prevalence of other cultural activity in the Shire. Recommendations include planning for an aging population, working to retain youth through training and providing improved entertainment and recreation, further supporting culture and heritage, and continuing support and improving access to help disadvantaged persons bridge the gap.

Economic Development

Economic and urban development in the shire is built upon agriculture, tourism and business industries. Agriculture has faced recent downturns, but there is some expansion in new directions and hope for the future. Tourism is the Shire's best option to attract development, but this must be balanced with maintaining the integrity of the Shire's attraction as filled with pristine natural wonders. It is expected that tourism will grow over ensuing years as a result of significant development currently in progress. Opportunity exists to expand the Shire's manufacturing capabilities. Business in the Shire will benefit from information currently being collated. Economic development plans have been created to coordinate future directions.

Recommendations include streamlining and diversifying the agricultural industries, encouraging sustainable tourism development, seeking manufacturing opportunities, and collating improved business information.



STATE OF THE SHIRE REPORT 2005

Summary of the Recommendations arising from the State of the Shire Report

Biodiversity

- Improve conservation area and ecosystems management.
- Develop a strategy for appropriate fire regimes where required.
- Combat wetland losses, and re-establish wetland areas.
- Continue efforts ongoing to control introduced weed plants and feral animals in reserves, and to manage domestic animals.
- Promote rehabilitation and preservation of areas with endangered plants.
- Continue efforts to preserve key endangered animals and their habitat.
- Manage development and infrastructure to reduce impacts to wildlife.
- Improve information on the Shire's flora and fauna, and their distribution.
- Invite Universities and other groups to conduct research in the Shire.

Land Management

- Continue revegetation along the Shire's rivers, especially on private land.
- Better management of the use of certain pesticides, particularly around drainage and waterways.
- Council continue and improve implementation of sediment and erosion control along unsealed roads and during roadwork.
- Agricultural landholders improve preventative management where nutrients and sediments continue to escape off-farm.
- Landholders continue pest management on private land, to prevent the spread of the problem.
- Improve information describing land usage areas in the Shire, especially for types of agriculture.

Water and Atmosphere

- Assessment be conducted of water quantity in the Shire, due to issues in localised areas during the dry season, and increasing levels of extraction.
- Water quality be further improved with continued adoption of better land management practices by all stakeholders.
- Water monitoring be established to show improvements to land management are having a positive effect.
- Implement tertiary treatment at the sewage treatment plant, and improve sewage infrastructure.
- Council continue to promote initiatives diverting waste from landfill.
- Reducing energy consumption is essential at a global level; Council is to act as a flagship to the rest of community.

Community and Heritage

- Planning adequate social infrastructure to provide for an aging population.
- Develop initiatives to retain youth in, or attract youth to the Shire.
- Educational opportunities appropriate to planned economic development of the Shire be made available.
- Develop bridging solutions to improve the distribution of wealth in the Shire.
- Attract development of more rental housing in the Shire.
- The community services continue to be funded to provide support people and in their work to implement proactive solutions to social issues in the community.
- Multicultural recognition continue, with further celebration of the Shire's diversity.
- Preservation and promotion of the Shire's built, cultural and historical heritage continue.
- Cultural activities continue to receive funding and support to enliven the Shire.
- Council promote involvement by the community in decision making, and act to represent the community's interests sustainably.

Economic Development

- Encourage tourism as an important avenue to improve the Shire's economy.
- Development to be well integrated with conservation, as this is the attraction the Shire can best offer to expand tourism, and for resident's quality of life.
- Improve transport arrangements and accommodation to meet tourism demand.
- The primary industries diversify and streamline operations to improve their economy.
- Expand manufacture in the Shire through opportunities for collaboration and by adoption of new product types.
- Continue to encourage retail and wholesale to develop Innisfail as the centre of a regional shopping catchment.

What Can I Do for Our Future?

- Contact DNR&M before clearing any vegetation on my land; clearing most types of vegetation is now illegal.
- Engage in revegetation on under-utilised portions of my land. Council offers a rates discount in some areas of the Shire to encourage this.
- Control pets to prevent them from harassing wildlife.
- Join in one weekend at a revegetation planting by Landcare or the Community Revegetation Unit.
- Consider planting native plants in the garden to attract wildlife.
- Drive safely and take care in wildlife areas.

- NHT funding is available to help to re-establish riparian vegetation on my land.
- Only appropriate pesticides should be used near drainage or on certain soil types, and application should be avoided during wet weather. Advice is available from various agencies.
- A wide range of agencies have solutions to help improve land management practices.
- Advice on pest management is available from the DNR&M and from Council. Some pests, legally, must be controlled.
- Overstocking land is likely to encourage weed infestation.

- Many options exist to reduce water consumption in the home, and also for businesses.
- Composting toilets are an option to prevent nutrients affecting groundwater, and hence the Shire's waterways.
- Continue to separate wet and dry waste into the bins, and compost most organic waste.
- Discourage littering and pollution of the environment, including stormwater drainage.
- Illegal connections of stormwater to sewage overload the community's sewage system.

- Contribute to the community by participating in events, and by being neighbourly as well as respectful.
- Join a community or recreational group.
- Contribute to the towns' beautification by taking pride in and maintaining property.
- Funding is available through RADF to put on events and cultural displays, as well as to encourage artistic development.
- Be aware there are support solutions available, for a wide range of issues, and accessible to anyone.

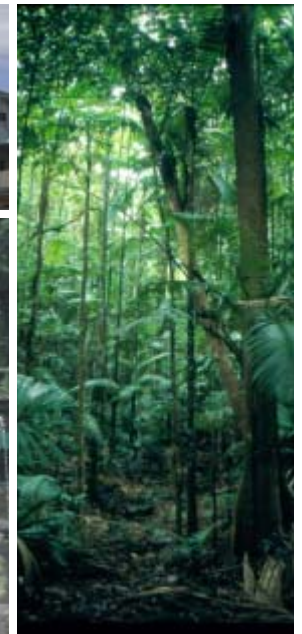
- Encourage tourists and visitors to enjoy their stay in the Shire, through basic friendliness and helpfulness.
- Promote attractions in the Shire, or direct visitors to the Visitor Information's Centres.
- Land management solutions can reduce cost inputs into farming by reducing waste.
- Participate in initiatives by the Chambers of Commerce towards economic development of the Shire.
- Grants from various levels of government are available for business development.
- Shop local.



Sustainable Development

Sustainable Development is based upon the realisation that the resources and the natural processes in the world are finite in their capacity to withstand utilisation or change. Therefore, unless we are conservative in our utilisation of resources or our impact on the environment, we lessen the capacity of the environment to support future production, and thereby affect the quality of life for everyone, including future generations.

Another realisation important to achieving sustainable development is that different spheres of activity interact and affect one another. The philosophy of the State of the Shire Report is that there are three main realms to our environment. These include the natural environment, the economic environment, and our community environment. Each of these spheres is affected by the condition of the others; through ecological life support and resources, available finances and enterprise, and through quality of life and social improvement. The state of each of these determines our attitude towards the others.



Sustainable Development includes planning that ensures progress in one sphere does not have detrimental effects upon the others. Balance has to be achieved, or eventually there will be costs incurred; to repair the repercussions to the other spheres, all of which are essential to our survival, and the survival of our inheritors.

Local Government's Role

Local Government in Queensland is responsible for a wide range of operational and regulatory tasks, including planning, waste collection, maintenance of roads and parks, provision of water supply and sewage treatment infrastructure, and community services, as well as implementation of environmental policies and programs. Johnstone Shire Council is committed to protecting and enhancing the natural, economic, built and social environment through effective and efficient environmental management.



This report has listed a number of recommendations that are aimed at reducing the pressures on the environment where required, or aimed at maintaining the current state. The report provides a detailed background, from which Council can determine directions for planning.

This brief summary is only a component of the State of the Shire Reporting information available. Detailed information is available on the CD included, and is also available in print from the Johnstone Shire library. A downloadable and a low resolution version are available from Council's website, at www.jsc.qld.gov.au.

For further information, please contact Council's Environment Department, on (07) 4030 2264.

(Pictures of fish, trawlers, tourists, and cane harvesting courtesy of Tourism Queensland)

