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ENVIRONMENT
INSTITUTE OF
AUSTRALIA AND
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Draft South East Queensland Regional Plan Review Feedback

Department of Infrastructure and Planning

Reply Paid 15009

City East Qld 4002

Via email: seqreview@dip.qld.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: DRAFT SEQ REGIONAL PLAN 2009-2031

Please find attached South East Queensland Division of the Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand's (EIANZ SEQ Division) submission on the draft SEQ Regional Plan 2009-2031.

The EIANZ is the peak professional body for environmental practitioners in Australasia, and promotes independent and interdisciplinary discourse on sustainability issues. The Institute advocates that best environmental practices be delivered by competent and ethical environmental practitioners.

The SEQ Division acknowledges the on-going contribution that the Regional Plan makes to the management of development in the region and welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft SEQ Regional Plan 2009-2031 and to contribute to its further development, its implementation and its next review.

The Plan continues to contain a number of pleasing features and EIANZ SEQ Division acknowledges that the State Government has recognised many of the issues contained in the EIANZ SEQ Division submission on the SEQ Regional Plan 2005~2026, including the need to address traffic congestion and the likely consequences of climate change.

However, the following issues previously raised have yet to be addressed in the current draft Plan:

- The SEQ Regional Plan doesn't specifically enunciate the specific regional and state outcomes that might be achieved through planning (state interests) and that have implications for individuals and their communities in the region. Instead the Plan relies on inference being drawn from statements of policy.
- The Plan still lacks specific details on the Plan's implementation instead relying on largely unspecified actions by state (e.g. state agencies are to implement the Regional Plan and to adopt its principles and policies in their own planning), local governments (e.g. local government planning schemes are to reflect the Regional Plan) and by a range of community and industry groups.
- While there is general reference to the need to address conflict, specific guidance is not provided in the Regional Plan on:
 - how to balance denser development with environmental protection nor for mitigating any adverse impacts; or
 - how conflicts between incompatible land uses and desirable regional outcomes (DROs), especially within the RL&RP area, might be resolved.
- While there are numerous references to the need to link this Plan with other Plans in the Region it is not clear how the various Plans are to be integrated at a strategic and operational level.
- While there is reference to legislation support for the implementation of the Regional Plan, the Regional Plan doesn't provide for further legislative reform to better integrate statutory planning with non-statutory environmental and natural resource planning.
- The Plan fails to provide adequate detail on how to evaluate, in real time, progress in the achievement of the desired regional outcomes.

EIANZ SEQ Division would like to cooperate with the Department of Infrastructure and Planning (DIP) as the SEQ plan evolves, with a view that it will clearly meet our expectations of the community of planning:

- to enhance predictability;
- to avoid future conflict relating to the use and management of land; and
- limit the cumulative impacts of development to pre-determined targets.

It is believed that this is best achieved through community involvement in a consideration of scenarios, appropriate mechanisms and actions to achieve agreed regional outcomes.

The Institute is also prepared to undertake professional development activities to raise the competency of environmental professionals to contribute to the development and implementation of planning schemes and to continue its membership of relevant Advisory Committees.

To avoid unnecessary duplication we are also attaching a copy of the EIANZ SEQ Division submission on the SEQ Regional Plan 2005-2026.

Thanking you again for the opportunity to comment.

Yours faithfully



Claire Gronow

President, South East Queensland Division EIANZ

**Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand (EIANZ)
South East Queensland Division**

**Submission to the Queensland Department of Infrastructure and Planning
Draft South East Queensland Regional Plan 2009-2031**

Preamble

Our Submission

The Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand is pleased to have this opportunity to provide a submission to the Department of Infrastructure Planning (DIP) on the Draft South East Queensland Regional Plan 2009-2031.

The Institute's submission is structured in a way that:

- provides DIP with confirmation that the Plan has some strength areas, but could also benefit from some quick wins which we believe will make immediate improvements to the Plan; and
- makes other more complex suggestions and recommendations at the Plan becoming a scenario-based strategy capable of guiding the sustained growth of the region.

The Role of Environmental Practitioners

The Institute contends that environmental practitioners have an important contribution to make to the field of sustainable regional Planning. Our interests cover natural and social sciences, engineering and law as well as management. Such a contribution could include the following:

- providing an **information conduit** between regional planning policymakers, community groups, industry and business, noting that environmental professionals are also part of these groups ;
- **advising decision-makers** at local, regional and state level on how best to **integrate** the consideration of climate change, resource management and environmental assessment into land use planning and assessment decision-making;
- **exploiting the synergies** between different areas of **land use** and **environmental policy**. For example, providing advice on growth patterns, resource consumption and management, climate change mitigation and adaptation, water security, biodiversity enhancement clean energy and social change;
- **testing growth scenario's**, ensuring that future planning strategies are robust and grounded in social and natural science principles, acknowledging that impacts are cumulative, the region's natural capital has limited carrying capacity and that our ecological footprint is currently unsustainable; and
- providing **multi-disciplinary input** into standards and guidelines.

1.0 Introduction

The South East Queensland Division of the Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand (the Institute) is thankful for the opportunity to contribute to the development of the South East Queensland Region Plan 2009-2031 (the Plan).

We gratefully acknowledge the initiative of the Department of Infrastructure and Planning (DIP) to incorporate suggestions from the Institute's submission on the Draft Regional Plan in 2005, in particular among other things, addressing climate change.

We wish to take this opportunity to:

- acknowledge what we believe are the strengths of the Draft Plan; and
- identify some matters that can be easily addressed in the Draft Plan to generate quick wins for the region.

Our 2005 submission maintains the Institute's position on a number of issues relevant to the sustainable management of the region, and as such we direct the Department to this submission (Appendix A). We have indicated in our 2005 submission (highlighted) the areas we wish the Department to reconsider (these were summarised in the covering letter).

In addition, to these issues there are five other major matters that we would like to raise at this time, namely the:

- purpose of revising the Plan;
- lack of Program Logic;
- lack of a transparent planning scenario;
- role of sustainability in the formulation of the Plan and the need to address climate change and other non population related issues separately from sustainability; and
- need for an adaptive management approach to the further development, monitoring and evaluation of the plan.

2.0 Acknowledging the Strengths

As we acknowledged in our 2005 submission to the Office of Urban Management, the Institute regards the SEQ Regional Plan as an important response to the environmental issues and challenges facing the region. The Institute strongly supports the idea of a regional planning tool for SEQ.

We believe the current Draft Plan has improved upon the previous in a number of key areas, including:

- climate change adaptation, mitigation and management;
- the planning of key development areas (future growth and identified growth areas);
- planning the delivery of urban infrastructure through the establishment of a Broad hectare Infrastructure Group;
- seeking to mobilise best practice pilot projects by establishing the Climate Change Steering Group; and
- planning the timing of the future land release through the Metropolitan Development Program.

3.0 Some Quick Wins

We believe the Plan could be strengthened with the following minor amendments:

- clearly articulating the link between the relevant regional planning documents (RP, NRM Plan, Climate Smart 2050, Q2 etc) – simple diagram describing the relationship would be beneficial;
- restructuring the Plan to ensure that accountability of all actions, programs and policies is in a similar format to the SEQ Infrastructure Plan and Program, listing the policies and programs in tabular format and assigning each to the relevant agency / authority / department);
- a summary of the previous five years performance against the Strategic Directions and Desired Regional Outcomes;
- unless there are good reasons not to do so, apply similar principles to both the Urban Footprint and to the Regional Landscape and Rural Production Areas e.g. in relation to DRO 2 merge policies 2.1.1 and 2.1.2;
- Government to indicate what specific priority outcomes it is seeking to achieve through planning and how these interests are to be related to the respective responsibilities of its agencies; and
- indicate in the sub regional narratives that provision is to be made for a strategic consideration of non-urban lands and to support this with the insertion of a new Program 3.1.7:

Recommendation 1:

Include a new Program 3.1.7 that reads something like the following:

To develop an agreed rural land use planning process' recognising that the development of the strategic framework would be undertaken in collaboration with bodies such as Council of Mayors; Griffith University; SEQ Catchments; PIA and EIANZ. EIANZ agrees to contribute to the implementation of such activity.

4.0 Why Revise the Plan?

The Institute questions the need for the current view of the Plan. DIP has not presented for public comment any information relating to the performance of the current Plan. We understand and support the fact that it is a requirement under section 2.5A of the Integrated Planning Act 1997 (IPA) that the plan is regularly reviewed and updated. However, such reviews should be in the context of 'continual improvement' (an adaptive management approach). This requires a transparent statement regarding what aspects of the Plan and its implementation the Government believes are not delivering in relation to the objectives and desired outcomes of the Plan. Such a transparent statement is also required by the public so that the community can meaningfully:

- assess the Government's motivations for change and concomitant suggested revisions;
- engage with the Government in the review and formulation of revisions to the Plan; and
- assess the progress towards the objectives of the Plan.

Fundamentally, to continually improve the Plan requires that the Government and the community have a shared understanding of how we are progressing towards the outcomes the Plan. For example, the Plan explicitly states that State agencies are required to implement the Plan, adopting the Plan's principles and policies in their own planning. It also requires local governments to amend their planning schemes and adopt policies that align with the Plan. Has this happened? How well has it happened?

Recommendation 2:

As part of this review of the Plan the Government should outline and establish a more robust and transparent monitoring and reporting framework for the Plan and its

administrative, procedural, and substantive objectives. This should include a consideration of how the five year State of Region report could function as a more proactive method of measuring the Plan's performance, rather than being a lag indicator report as at present.

5.0 Program Logic

The Draft Plan addresses a wide range of issues associated with the growth and development of the region. One of the downfalls with the Draft Plan however, is that it is difficult to see or comprehend the relationships between the various Regional Policies and their associated Principles, Policies and Programs. This inadvertently has the effect of creating silos between the various Regional Policies as opposed to integrating them for good planning outcomes.

Program Logic documents the rationale behind a program such as the draft plan and could identify cause and effect relationships between the Regional Policies and associated Principles, Policies and Programs. Program Logic is usually represented as a diagram or matrix that shows a series of expected consequences, not just a sequence of events. There is substantial literature available regarding Program Logic and the Australian Government (2009) *A Guide to Developing and Using Program Logic in Natural Resource Management* provides a good synopsis.

The Institute believes that Program Logic should be applied to the Draft Plan in conjunction with Scenario Planning (see Section 6.0 below).

Recommendation 3:

The Draft Plan should be based around a Program Logic Framework to highlight consequences associated with the Plan as opposed to simply outlining a series of events. The Program Logic should be undertaken in conjunction with Scenario Planning.

6.0 Scenario Planning

The Institute believes that best practice long term regional planning is dependent upon a having reasoned and credible scenario of the future against which a plan is formulated. For a large urban area such a scenario would contain a range of elements that describe a plausible future. Some of these elements will be desirable, some will be challenges that must be responded to if undesirable effects are to be avoided or mitigated.

The Institute notes that a scenario based approach was used in the formulation of the South East Queensland Water Strategy (SEQWS), yet it is not transparently evident in the draft Plan. The SEQWS was formulated with respect to a very small number of scenarios based on number of variables, climate, technology, energy costs, and other factors. In this way the SEQWS planners formulated a plan that they considered robust for the future.

We also note that the Government is developing an Oil Vulnerability Mitigation Strategy and Action Plan. The current discussion paper on this issue:

- outlines a number of scenarios regarding oil supply, availability, and price;
- discusses the issues and challenges associated with each scenario; and
- canvases responses to the challenges in each scenario.

While the Plan identifies a number of principles, policies and programs relating to climate change it does not provide guidance on the various possible scenarios that could result through climate change and leaves this open to others to determine.

There are many other instances of such scenario planning activities by the State and Commonwealth Governments.

In contrast, the Draft Plan explicitly refers to only one scenario with one variable, population: 4.4 million for the region in 2031. Implicitly the draft Plan is based on the largely unstated scenario and assumptions of the existing Plan. Given the level of opposition to population growth the Plan should at least explain:

- why continued growth will be difficult to contain;
- why it is likely to grow;
- what the implications of lesser numbers being achieved are;
- what the costs and benefits of such population growth are; and
- how are the various DROs affected by the various scenarios e.g. those relating to mobility; provision of infrastructure; cost and availability of critical natural resources such as water, land and extractive materials; costs of essential commodities such as of critical natural resources; food; energy and housing; pollution; loss of significant biodiversity; changes to lifestyle; access to the various forms of recreation; provision of government services; incidence of crime?

The Plan should also describe expected changes to the region's population structure and distribution. Such explanations should be contrasted to the region's expected carrying capacity and resource needs.

As the full scenario on which the current draft Plan is unclear, it is very difficult to meaningfully assess its suitability for the region and its acceptability by the community. For the community to do this the Plan must provide an explanation of the:

- range of scenarios considered;
- variations within the parameters of each scenario; and
- reasons why the planning scenario was chosen in terms of the likely costs and benefits that are likely to accrue.

Without this knowledge it is not possible to determine if the recommended actions and policies in the draft Plan:

- adequately address the issues and challenges that the region may face over the next 25 years;
- are capable of making the region able to respond to issues and challenges associated with changes not contained within the planning scenario;
- manage and reconcile competing interests and effects of cumulative impacts;
- provide certainty to local and regional communities, land owners, and developers; and
- produce outcomes the community supports and does so in a manner they find acceptable.

Recommendation 4:

The Regional Plan needs to be scenario-based. The scenarios considered should be described and the implications for planning of each of the scenarios considered. The reasons for the selection of the planning scenario should be presented and defended.

Winning acceptance of the planning scenario, and widespread understanding of it, will be critical in gaining and maintaining support for it within the community. Having scenario champions and other stakeholders who have an understanding of the planning scenario and its derivation will greatly assist

in gaining acceptance and promoting understanding. Also the planning scenario must be reviewed and revised as part of the process of keeping the Plan relevant to the needs of the region. Again the presence of scenario champions and other stakeholders will be useful in explaining revisions and the reasons for them. Achieving these outcomes will require a process for engaging with key regional stakeholders to formulate and revise the planning scenario adopted for planning purposes. The Institute is willing to assist the Government in establishing and maintaining this process.

Recommendation 5:

A process for formulating and revising the planning scenario and revisions to it needs to be established. This process needs to involve key stakeholders in scenario formulation and revision. This process would continue in the period between the formal releases of revised Plans.

The Plan is structured around achieving Desired Regional Outcomes (DRO's). The relevance and achievability of DRO's are directly related to the planning scenario chosen. DRO's also need to be linked to the planning scenario. Their relevance and achievability need to be articulated. If this is not done the Government risks the accusation of preparing a Plan for propaganda purposes only. The Institute does not believe this is the Government's intent.

Recommendation 6:

DRO's need to be justified in terms of how they are:

- relevant to the issues and challenges of the planning scenario;
- support the objectives of the plan;
- achievable; and
- measurable.

As the Plan indicated, change is constant in the region and planning needs to respond to this. Five year reviews however are constraining in terms of the lack of ability to respond to change in a rapid and efficient way. The Institute believes the draft Plan does not provide enough guidance on the principles that should be used to guide decision makers if unexpected changes occur, or if expected changes happen faster than expected. Also expected changes can have unexpected impacts at the local level. Such level impacts are source of most development conflicts in the region.

The Institute believes that the draft Plan provides insufficient guidance on the principles and standards that should be used to reconcile conflicts or guide comprises concerns impacts on important local and regional assets, amenities and values. The Institute's understanding of IPA indicates that such guidance from the Government is necessary for the intent of this Act to be realised.

Recommendation 7:

To provide better certainty to communities, land owners and developers the Plan should articulate the principles and standards that should be used to:

- evaluate the relative importance of local and regional assets, amenities and values;
- reconcile local and regional development conflicts; and
- identify which aspects of the Plan might be let go if changes occur that make parts or all of the planning scenario redundant.

7.0 Sustainability and the Plan

The Institute welcomes the fact that the Plan has the goal of making SEQ sustainable. The Institute believes that sustainable development involves achieving two major goals. First, sustainable development is the process of managing this portfolio of different forms of natural, material and non material capitals and assets to maximise the conservation of inexhaustible and exhaustible capital and assets into a stream of sustainable – or long term – benefits.

Second, the Institute supports the view that sustainable development involves improving (or at least not degrading) certain capacities of a region, such as:

- the ability to whether adverse challenges and respond to threats – robustness;
- the ability to innovate and embrace change – adaptiveness; and
- the ability to recover from adverse events – resilience.

While it is clear that the objective of the plan is to address the first view of sustainability it is not clear how the plan addresses the maintenance and improvement in the region's robustness, adaptiveness, and resilience.

Climate change is just one of the threats and challenges the region must address to remain prosperous in the long term. Indeed climate change is at least as big threat and challenge as population growth is to the robustness, adaptiveness and resilience of the region.

As the Plan is currently drafted it appears that it has been developed to address population growth, while other threats and challenges have been reduced to side issues. The Institute believes this is a serious deficiency in the Plan and the Draft Plan has missed the opportunity to rectify this.

The Institute believes that this is a symptom of lack of a scenario based approach to planning.

The range of issues that should be brought to the fore and explicitly addressed include, but are not limited to:

- the impact of an Carbon Emissions Trading Scheme on industry, transport, energy provision, concomitant infrastructure, and the urban form;
- the effects of increasing transport energy costs, and potential uncertainties to supply, on the region's transportation and urban infrastructure;
- changes to the frequency and extent of inundation of low lying and coastal areas due to climate change;
- the changes to the regional climate and its effects on:
 - regional environmental assets
 - agriculture and food supply
 - domestic gardens
 - public gardens and street scapes
 - public recreational infrastructure
 - building standards and the urban form
- how population growth will complicate and enhance responses to each of the above.

Recommendation 8:

The Plan should clearly be prepared to address in an integrated way the range future sustainability threats and challenges associated with a planning scenario, and not just be dominated by the population growth issue.

In addition, the Draft Plan does not clearly indicate, where in the absence of any change or future threats and challenges, the region is unsustainable. Actions to address the existing unsustainable components of the region are surely the priority of the Plan. Yet the Draft Plan does not identify these components or articulate the priority actions to address them.

Recommendation 9:

The Plan should be structured in terms of:

- current threats and challenges to sustainability;
- future sustainability threats and challenges associated with the planning scenario;
- DRO's with respect to robustness, adaptiveness, and resilience; and
- actions required to achieve the DRO's, including the assignment of all programs and policies to a responsible agency/authority/department.

8.0 The Need for a Transparent and Integrated Adaptive Management Approach

The Institute believes that for the Plan to be a success it must be a living document capable of adapting to:

- changing circumstances; and
- the success or otherwise of the structures and processes established to implement the Plan.

To ensure the ongoing relevance and success of the Plan requires a transparent monitoring and evaluation process. Such a process is also needed to maintain public confidence that the Plan is being implemented and achieving its stated goals.

The Institute believes that it is not possible to currently assess the relevance or success of the Plan's:

- implementation structures and processes; and
- goals and objectives.

As it is currently drafted the Plan reads as a policy document of Government rather than instrument for guiding and implementing objectives contained within it. To address this issue the Plan should more effectively and clearly:

- identify which agency or agencies are responsible for ensuring the implementation of objectives;
- articulate the accountabilities of these agencies; and
- establish and describe the
 - implementation structures and processes that will be employed to achieve the outcomes
 - structures and processes for monitoring implementation progress and movement toward outcomes
 - the indicators to be used to monitor success and progress
 - processes for evaluating success and relevance of
 - implementation structures and processes

- Plan objectives
- structures and processes for feeding the outcomes of the monitoring and evaluation processes into revisions and adjustments to future drafts of the Plan.

9.0 Amendments to the Legislative and Regulatory Framework.

There is a community expectation that the Plan will provide for a particular pattern of land use as a consequence of 'guided' development. However, the *Integrated Planning Act 1997 (IPA)* has as a basic premise that any form of development is acceptable unless it fails to meet certain criteria reflected in State Statutory Planning Documents *and* Local Government Planning Schemes. While it is desirable to reduce the number and use of overarching regulations, it is the Institute's view that there is currently too little guidance regarding preferred patterns of development and for the protection of key regional and local environmental and social assets.

The Institute notes the presence of a range of existing non-statutory planning processes and documents that receive support from Government. The Institute also notes that a common cause of conflict in the region is when development proceeds in a manner that contradicts the objectives of these non-statutory planning processes. Examples of these processes include:

- the SEQ NRM; and
- Healthy Waterways SEQ.

As the Institute understands it under IPA, non-statutory planning is essentially irrelevant to guiding development in SEQ. Formally including such planning documents under the Plan to give them statutory effect would overcome this limitation.

Recommendation 10:

The following reforms to IPA and the planning process should be considered and ways implemented to:

- permit the prohibition of certain forms of development from a given area if this can be demonstrated as not being in the public interest;
- give appropriate non-statutory planning processes statutory effect by including these planning documents as appendices to the Plan;
- make it a requirement for Local Governments to recognise non-statutory Plans appropriately prepared by Regional Bodies in their planning schemes; and
- include in an overriding need test how a development affects a cumulative impact target.