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## Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand South East Queensland Division

### SUBMISSION

#### Response to the Draft South East Queensland Regional Plan

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# INTRODUCTION

This document is the Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand South East Queensland Division's (EIANZ-SEQ) response to the *Draft South East Queensland Regional Plan* (DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN). As the professional organization representing environmental practitioners across a broad spectrum of expertise, EIANZ is primarily concerned with those aspects of the DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN affecting the management of the environment, and environmental outcomes. While sustainability is at the core of our concerns (and the central plank of the Plan), our interests range from ecology and nature conservation, natural resource management, open space and coastal planning, to pollution, water & air quality, waste management, climate change and urban form.

This response has been prepared by an EIANZ-SEQ working group appointed by the Executive, and is based on:

- the group's understanding of the DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN and assessment of the strategic environmental impacts of it (see Appendix A: SEQ Regional Plan - Strategic Environmental Scorecard)
- information provided at meetings of the following consultative committees
  - > Academic and Professionals Committee
  - > Regional Landscape & Open Space Advisory Committee
- discussions with staff of the Office of Urban Management (OUM) outside of these consultative committees
- discussions with members of other allied professional bodies and community groups
- the results of a public forum organised by the EIANZ-SEQ on 2 December 2004.
- the experience of the authors and other EIANZ Executive with:
  - > the current planning and approvals processes operating in Queensland
  - > research, development application and assessment, State and local government planning and Court appeals associated with:
    - planning and design
    - environmental, economic, population, social, and infrastructure challenges facing South East Queensland
    - environmental planning, management and assessment
    - strategic management and public administration
  - > and with our understandings of the planning and approvals processes operating in other states

EIANZ-SEQ commends the OUM on the DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN and regards it as an important response to the range of environmental issues and challenges facing SEQ today and in the immediate future. We agree with and support the broad intent of the DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN. For many years the sustainability of SEQ has been threatened by inadequately planned growth and development, reflecting the lack of a properly resourced and coordinated regional response to the needs

of the region. EIANZ-SEQ considers the DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN a significant step forward in redressing these past failings.

EIANZ-SEQ believes the following proposals within the DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN have merit:

- clear definition of an Urban Footprint, and associated regulations which set limits to urban growth, as a 'holding position' while the mechanisms to implement other provisions are developed
- Transit Oriented Developments (TODs)
- increased urban densities
- water consumption target
- a clear map of the broad scale nature conservation priorities in the region with protection of areas of State and Regional significance,
- protection of other important landscape and recreation areas, rural production areas and open space from incompatible uses and fragmentation
- changes to the discretionary powers of local governments with regards to subdivision and to minimum lot sizes within the Regional Landscape and Rural Production Area
- regional targets and sustainability performance indicators.

The Regional Plan has created community expectations of better planning, integration, coordination, infrastructure provision, ecological sustainability and resource management. Delivering on these expectations will require the creation and maintenance of broad political and stakeholder support for implementation and appropriate follow-through, and may also require legislative changes to the Integrated Planning Act (IPA) beyond those already put in place as part of the Regional Plan.

EIANZ-SEQ notes that in the last thirty years there have been a number of regional planning exercises (and associated documents) conducted by the State for SEQ. Our assessment is that, in general, these regional planning exercises have failed to change the pattern of urban growth and natural resource mismanagement, or their overall environmental impacts. On behalf of a wide range of stakeholders committed to sustainability, we hope that this time things will be different. However, it is the view of EIANZ-SEQ that the DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN as it is currently constituted is likely to have only limited success in slowing the current rate of environmental degradation.

Specific aspects of the DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN with which the EIANZ-SEQ has concerns include:

- the DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN does not adequately address or provide for the sustainable development of SEQ, and the extent to which it even lays the groundwork for sustainability cannot be evaluated until it is coupled to the forthcoming Regional Infrastructure Plan

- the designation of broad "no - go" areas (the "Regional Landscape and Rural Production" areas) does not adequately distinguish between national/international biodiversity significance and other State interests, other regional open space values, rural production and lifestyle issues – by lumping them all together the protection offered to high-significance areas and features is weakened
- the DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN is focussed almost entirely on urban growth, and does not adequately address sustainable natural resource management in the Regional Landscape and Open Space Areas, nor provide any clarity for rural economic futures
- areas within the Urban Footprint are likely to experience the most environmental and community impact from rapid urban growth, but the DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN provides little guidance for balancing denser development with environmental protection, nor for mitigating that impact
- the DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN so far demonstrates little relationship to the various environmental planning and natural resource management initiatives developed and implemented by State and local governments, regional organisations and other groups in SEQ, and although it expresses the importance of such integration, there is a risk that the Regional Plan may miss the opportunity to be an effective coordinating process
- although the targets and sustainability indicators are laudable, there is as yet no regulatory framework, nor any proposed mechanisms
  - > to ensure the DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN meets these targets
  - > for applying these criteria to local government planning, let alone requiring that they apply to development applications or natural resource management
- there is no environmental evaluation of the proposed extent of urban growth and employment generators in the western corridor, nor comparison with its sustainability compared to continued coastal corridor growth
- successful implementation of the intent and substance of the final Regional Plan is dependent on the State government enacting a range of legal and institutional reforms and providing sufficient resources for environmental planning and management at the regional and local government level
- the review of submissions to the draft Plan and the preparation of the final Regional Plan (and the Regional Infrastructure Plan due in April) should be transparent and accountable.

It is the view of EIANZ-SEQ that for the DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN to be effective it will need to address these major issues, and in particular to:

- focus more on promoting sustainability, rather just limiting the spatial extent of growth and responding to short and medium term infrastructure and water supply challenges arising from population growth
- address the medium and long term impacts of climate change, and provide strategies and targets aimed at ensuring that SEQ meet current and expected future international obligations in this regard

- address the perceived impact on the Regional Plan of the fate of non-viable rural land use in SEQ, and to provide the means for integrating production with biodiversity conservation and natural resource and open space management
- resource and legally empower local governments to generate ecologically, economically and socially sustainable urban settlements within the urban footprint
- provide for the creation of an integrated network of ecosystem reserves and corridors that
  - > meet the needs of locally and regionally important plant and species, not just the recreational needs of people
  - > are ecologically viable in the medium and long term
  - > are cost effective to maintain
  - > continue to supply the current level of ecosystem services across the region in the medium and long term, and are integrated into infrastructure planning and provision.

The remainder of this submission is organised in terms of explaining the EIANZ-SEQ position and our recommendations to address these issues in the final Regional Plan.

# SUSTAINABILITY AND THE DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN

The early pages of the DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN indicate that the primary reason for this document is the need of government to respond to the continued population growth in SEQ. It is common knowledge that while the rate of population growth is not that much greater than historic levels the absolute numbers of people arriving in SEQ are overwhelming the capacities of State agencies and local governments to provide the infrastructure and water supply needed to support this growth. The community has also expressed concern that the character and environmental attributes of the region are at risk from poorly planned and regulated growth. The Regional Plan is, in effect, a response to the inability of local governments and State agencies to work together within the current legislative planning framework to meet this challenge. The aim of the Regional Plan is clearly to ensure that future urban development:

- is sustainable, “generating prosperity while at the same time maintaining and enhancing quality of life and providing high levels of environmental management” (DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN, p. 5)
- proceeds in sequence with the provision of new transport, energy, water, and social infrastructure
- does not exceed the capacity of local government and other service providers to upgrade and expand supply in existing urban areas experiencing population growth
- does not exceed the capacity of water and energy providers to meet aggregate regional demand
- does not destroy the regional character of SEQ.

While these are laudable aims they do not equate to a real commitment to meeting the community’s vision for SEQ nor to the highest standards of sustainable development. For instance, there is a strong case for the dramatic increase in the efficiency of resource use within the region, if future prosperity is to be assured. This has clear links with the Government’s commitment to the Smart State initiative. The relationship between the sustainability objectives of the Regional Plan and the Smart State initiative need to be clarified and strengthened.

EIANZ-SEQ also believes that the Regional Plan should provide a framework that ensures that all new developments must undergo a transparent and common triple bottom line assessment, and satisfy clear criteria regarding environmental, social and economic objectives. EIANZ-SEQ supports the view that all such criteria must be treated equally for development to be deemed to be sustainable. For this to occur it may be necessary for the Government to adopt a “no net environmental harm” policy, to ensure that economic and social objectives do not dominate development assessment.



To provide a further insight into the potential environmental and other impacts of the draft SEQ regional plan on the sustainability of SEQ, the plan has been reviewed by EIANZ-SEQ at a strategic level as part of a 'strategic environmental assessment (SEA) report card' (refer to Appendix A). While EIANZ-SEQ acknowledges that assessment has been carried out at a simplistic level, and does not constitute a full strategic environmental assessment, it has the potential to forecast the influence of current decision making processes and drivers upon the future shape of the region.

The issues examined in our SEA have been broadly categorised as environmental, social and economic, following the traditional triple-bottom line approach.

The SEA 'report card' highlights some areas where the DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN is considered to deliver negative, neutral or positive outcomes for the SEQ environment. It was generally noted that while the plan sets out a broad range of strategies to reach a desired vision, it currently lacks adequate implementation powers.

Key issues noted during the preparation of the SEA report card include:

- the reliance on individual local government's ability and capacity to deliver outcomes described in the plan
- there has been little assessment to date of the likely demographic changes the region is likely to experience
- there has been limited assessment to date of the impact of the preferred or alternative patterns of development upon the SEQ airshed
- many of the strategies are more a 'statement of intent' rather than strategies
- clearer delineation of the responsibilities outside OUM will be necessary to ensure the objectives of the plan can be met
- the lack of linkages between rural protection area maps and strategies
- the lack of implementation strategies for the protection of areas of regional environmental significance within the urban footprint area.

Full details on the strategic environmental assessment report card are to be found in Appendix A.

EIANZ-SEQ recommends that the Regional Plan broaden its focus from merely setting spatial limits to urban development and meeting the future infrastructure, water, and energy needs of an expanded population. It is essential that the Regional Plan also:

- focuses more on promoting and ensuring sustainability, rather than just shuffling growth from one place to another and responding to short and medium term infrastructure and water supply challenges arising from population growth

- addresses the medium and long term impacts of climate change, and provide strategies and targets aimed at ensuring that SEQ meet current and expected future international obligations in this regard
- resources and legally empowers local governments to generate ecologically, economically and socially sustainable urban settlements within the urban footprint
- creates an integrated network of ecosystem reserves, private conservation areas, buffered waterways and corridors (an effective Natural Area Network or NAN) that:
  - > protects significant ecosystems, species and habitats, as well as the open space and scenic amenity needs of people
  - > are ecologically viable in the medium and long term
  - > are cost effective to maintain
  - > continues to supply the current level of ecosystem services across the region in the medium and long term, and are integrated into infrastructure planning and provision.

## PLANNING FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

Planning for climate change is already affecting aspects of the Regional Plan: primarily water and energy issues. In recent decades temperatures in SEQ have risen while rainfall has fallen. This has had two major impacts:

- water entering the region's surface storages has fallen below levels anticipated when they were planned and built, affecting supply and regional water security
- higher summer temperatures have lead to
  - > higher demands levels of water consumption
  - > a rapid expansion in the per capita installation and use of air conditioners – this is leading to a major increase in energy demand in SEQ.

Together these are undermining the water and energy security of the region.

As of now the Kyoto Protocol is in effect. In addition, the European Union has indicated that it will be seeking dramatic reductions in Carbon emissions in the next International Climate Treaty after Kyoto expires in 2012. At present they are seeking a 60% reduction in Carbon emissions by 2050. To achieve such a target it will be necessary to do more than reduce land clearing; rather it will require dramatic reductions in the use of coal, oil, and gas. This means that it is likely that sometime in the life of the Regional Plan SEQ will be required to make significant reductions in the amount of:

- coal and gas it consumes to generate electricity
- oil and gas it uses for transportation.

EIANZ-SEQ believes that the future prosperity of SEQ and Queensland generally, is dependent on developing and installing climate friendly, sustainable energy technologies to meet:

- its growing energy needs, and
- meet future international obligations.

EIANZ-SEQ recommends that the Regional Plan provide some indication how the region will meet international demands to reduce it's use of fossil fuels after 2012 and beyond possibly in the form of a SEQ Regional Climate Change Strategy.

This Strategy would need to establish detailed principles and targets for:

- total fossil Carbon emissions
- per capital and average household energy consumption
- adoption and installation of
  - > wind, solar, thermo-electric and tidal energy sources
  - > cogeneration technologies
  - > sustainable housing and urban design principles (refer to the section called urban design and ecosystem services)

- use of public transport over private vehicle use

The DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN refers to the need to adopt sustainable energy efficient housing. However, we do not believe that this will be enough on its own to address this issue. We also note that the DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN is seeking to improve transport efficiencies via the promotion of Transport Oriented Development and ancillary measures to:

- encourage a more compact urban form
- create a more efficient transport network.

However, overseas experience indicates that such measures have little significant impact on reducing peak hour congestion, a major source of fossil Carbon emissions. Tolls on major roads also seem to have little aggregate effect. Instead, EIANZ-SEQ recommends the use of additional measures such as a “congestion tax” on road users to:

- discourage single occupancy trips in private vehicles
- encourage greater use of public transport.

The DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN suggests that it may be necessary to construct desalination plants to ensure secure water supplies. However, this is a very energy intensive process, and with current technologies will contribute to the regions fossil Carbon emissions. If desalination is adopted it will be necessary to offset carbon emissions associated with it somewhere else in the region. Yet the DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN provides no indication of who such off-sets would be made.

Other than planning to meet future international obligations regarding climate change, EIANZ-SEQ recommends that the Regional Plan should clearly articulate how the region is to plan for minimising the impacts of climate change on:

- existing coastal and low lying communities
- port facilities
- the region’s ecosystems and biodiversity
- the health of the community associated with changes to the geographical ranges of disease organisms.

## NATURE CONSERVATION AND OPEN SPACE

EIANZ-SEQ commends the DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN on providing a clear basis for regional conservation planning (in Map 3 Nature Conservation) which establishes priorities for areas and features of State, regional and local significance. While this brings with it a greater degree of certainty for land use planning it should be recognised that the current mapping products presented in DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN are broad scale and represent only a 'snapshot' of currently available data.

It should also be noted that the bioregional corridors identified on Map 3 are at very broad scale and represent only one part of what we hope will be a Natural Area Network (NAN) in SEQ, and one layer of a Regional Open Space Network (ROSN). **EIANZ-SEQ recommends the development of a NAN and the re-consideration of a ROSN (carrying on the work of the former RL&OS Committee) to guide local government planning and provide a framework for both protection and rehabilitation of strategic habitat gaps.**

EIANZ-SEQ considers that Principle 1.2 and Strategy S1.4 are exceptionally broad and give the erroneous impression that the regional planning process regards all existing policies, programs and strategies as being adequate and requiring little further consideration. EIANZ-SEQ members are at the 'coalface' of conflict between nature conservation priorities and development expectations, where differing interpretations of appropriate ESD trade-offs regularly cause disputes. **EIANZ-SEQ recommends that the Regional Plan should provide more explicit guidance on conservation targets, linked to State of the Environment (SOE) indicators as well as to the sustainability indicators in the regional plan.**

Nature Conservation Strategies should also recognise that most of the biodiversity of SEQ is on private land, which will always provide most of the habitat for 'at risk' species and ecosystems as well as common biota. **EIANZ-SEQ recommends that specific regional and strategies be developed to encourage the protection and management of a wide range of natural values on private land.**

EIANZ-SEQ recommends that the regional plan provide appropriate triggers for assessment of impacts on sensitive ecosystems (eg. for applications bordering wetlands) and these be mandatory for local governments to adopt.

EIANZ-SEQ is concerned that the emphasis of the Draft Regional Plan and regulations on restricting land development to the Urban Footprint (as a key strategy in protecting regional environmental values) may create the climate for denser development in inappropriate parts of the Footprint, placing at risk many areas and ecological processes of high conservation significance. Areas within the Urban Footprint are likely to experience the most environmental and community impact from rapid urban growth, but the DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN provides no guidance

for balancing denser development with environmental protection, nor for mitigating those impacts. EIANZ-SEQ recommends that the Regional Plan address the impact of development on regionally-important ecosystems, species, habitats and corridor links within the Urban Footprint.

EIANZ-SEQ recognises and applauds the SEQ Regional Land Use plan (Map 2) and associated draft regulatory provisions as protecting areas of State and Regional nature conservation significance, important landscape and recreation areas, and rural production areas from incompatible uses and fragmentation. However EIANZ-SEQ is concerned that the lumping together of nature conservation, rural production, extractive resources, scenic amenity and outdoor recreation (everything non-urban) has blurred important distinctions, with implications not only for stakeholder confusion but also for the development of appropriate planning and management responses.

EIANZ-SEQ recommends that it be a requirement that, all strategies for addressing the separate and often conflicting desirable regional outcomes (DRO)s for the Regional Landscape and Rural Production Area, clearly identify:

- how they will impact on the other DROs
- means of mitigating any likely negative consequences.

The designation of broad "no - go" areas (the "Regional Landscape and Rural Production" areas) does not adequately distinguish between State interests in biodiversity, nature conservation, other regional open space values, rural production, extractive industry and lifestyle issues, and by lumping them all together the protection offered to high-significance areas and features is weakened.

EIANZ-SEQ recommends that the Regional Plan provide guidance on how conflicts between incompatible uses within the Regional Landscape and Rural Production areas, especially those affecting nature conservation values, might be resolved. With respect to Principle 1.6, EIANZ-SEQ considers that an additional strategy is appropriate to reinforce the link between rural land management and nature conservation, viz: "*Assist/support rural industries to maintain productivity whilst sustainably managing biodiversity and other regional landscape values.*"

EIANZ-SEQ is not yet confident that the current *SEQ Regional Scenic Amenity Study* will deliver suitable outcomes to inform the regional planning process, and considers that the specific reference to this one particular study is inappropriate. EIANZ-SEQ considers that the Strategy should refer more broadly to identification of high scenic amenity values (see DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN, p. 20) as a basis for planning, design and decision-making, and include the *Scenic Amenity Study* as one of the documents listed on page 27 of the DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN.

# URBAN DESIGN AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

Urban areas are dependent on the surrounding natural and open space environment for a range of ecosystem services. The Regional Open Space Network, including natural areas, requires long-term protection and management in order to continue providing these services. Indeed, the DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN recognises the value of ecosystem services and the need to ensure that they are maintained, yet it contains no clear strategy for protecting and managing the Open Space Network, other than the creation of the Regional Landscape and Rural Production Area.

EIANZ-SEQ believes that this broad-brush approach will not adequately:

- protect important ecosystems and species inside the urban footprint
- maximise the provision and use of ecosystem services throughout the region.

Ecosystem services are provided by nature free of charge. These include services such as purifying water, cooling the air and reducing wind speeds in streets. Typically when there is widespread urban development the supply of ecosystem services is reduced and society makes up the short fall with an investment of capital.

Traditional approaches to providing infrastructure for urban development are costly to government and householders, and leads to unnecessarily ecologically destruction.

There are many economic and social benefits to retaining native vegetation, and making aggressive use of water sensitive urban design principles. EIANZ-SEQ believes that by planning to make maximum use of ecosystem services governments can not only reduce the cost of building and maintaining urban infrastructure, but suburbs will also be more pleasant to live in and provide habitat for wildlife.

If the costs associated with providing the infrastructure needed to support the expected growth of SEQ are to be kept to a minimum then it will be necessary to utilise the services that the region's ecosystems are already providing. This means that the urban footprint will need to incorporate existing environmental assets into the infrastructure network, and build infrastructure that is heavily integrated with natural systems.

It is not enough to think of urban infrastructure as only roads, rail and bus networks, sewers and water supply networks, power cables, and sports grounds. We must recognise the valuable services that existing environmental assets in urban areas provide. If we don't we run the risk of living in a "concrete jungle" that is unnecessarily expensive to build and maintain.

EIANZ-SEQ recommends that the Regional Plan contains a strategy for protecting and managing the region's ecosystem services provided by the Open Space Network, and ensures that future urban development makes maximum use of these ecosystem services.

The DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN contains some principles for sub-tropical design (p.41) which EIANZ-SEQ sees merit in. EIANZ-SEQ also sees merit in the Integrated Urban Water Management (IUWM) principles set out on p. 65. However, these principles largely refer to the:

- design of houses and other buildings
- aesthetic issues to do with views and neighbourhood character
- water supply, conservation and reuse
- and to a lesser extent the inclusion of natural vegetation in the urban form.

In order to adequately protect biodiversity and maximise the supply of ecosystem services it is necessary to adopt a fully integrated approach to the planning, construction and maintenance of all aspects of the urban form.

The table below (from Carden and Maher 2004) lists a number of interlocking urban design principles that maximise the:

- protection of ecosystems and biodiversity
- supply of ecosystem services.

**Table 1: Design and construction principles for 'Nature Smart' urban development**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● identify the species that will be considered most important to protect - both locally and regionally - and design for their reproductive, foraging, and predator avoidance needs in mind</li><li>● clear only land that will be used for roads, buildings, or public infrastructure in the first instance, and maintain the original topography of the site</li><li>● establish generous reserves that are linked to other reserves or corridors on and off site</li><li>● ensure that all uncleared areas on the site connect to each other as much as possible</li><li>● when rehabilitating disturbed land revegetate using known locally and regionally important food plants - trees through to herbaceous plants - not just dominant trees</li><li>● when landscaping streets and parks use known locally and regionally important food plants - trees through to herbaceous plants - not just dominant trees</li><li>● ensure waterways and wetlands are retained</li><li>● retain the original topography of the site and use alternative drainage and water runoff management systems (i.e. WSUD) that mimic or maintain existing hydrological and biological systems to:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>&gt; ensure adequate water flows to reserves and corridors</li><li>&gt; protect riparian flora from nutrient stimulated invasions of exotic</li><li>&gt; retain water quality and flow regimes</li></ul></li><li>● traffic calm all streets, and provide land bridges over arterial roads and highways</li><li>● restrict pets or implement measures to minimise their impact on wildlife</li></ul>
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Carden and Maher (2004, p. 50)



The above principles are examples of the direction if not the degree of detail required in the Regional Plan to promote sustainable urban development, especially if used in conjunction with:

- the latest Green Smart and sustainable housing design principles
- integrated urban water management principles
- water sensitive urban design principles (WSUD).

# STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT INSIDE THE REGIONAL LANDSCAPE AND RURAL PRODUCTION AREA

Most areas of rural production and of environmental significance lie within the Regional Landscape and Rural Production (RL&RP) Area. As about 80% of SEQ is in private ownership and used for some form of rural production, the fate of rural enterprises has significant implications for the economy of local towns and villages as well as the maintenance of regional environmental, social and economic values.

While the Regional Plan represents a good start in protecting rural land use from rural residential development within the RL&RP the DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN appears to fail to recognise the implications of the selected planning tools on the future options of non-viable and potentially non-viable rural enterprises within the area.

Unless the issue of rural viability is addressed, non-viable enterprises are likely to be sold lot by lot for essentially "rural residential" purposes. This has potential implications for the RL&RP Area's environmental, visual amenity, open space, water quality, and weed and pest values.

The DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN appears to provide evidence of a lack of a whole-of-government approach in dealing with rural planning issues, one that appears to fail to recognise that planning has multiple objectives and the need to consider the implications for each of the key players. The reference to links with other Strategies that involve planning (infrastructure, water etc) rather than relevant parts being incorporated into a single regional plan for SEQ is of concern.

It is the view of EIANZ-SEQ that it is possible that the viability of a number of farms in SEQ is a direct result of the inadequacy of past State and local government planning decisions. These include the failure to recognise the implications of:

- unrestricted urban development and infrastructure provision (many transportation) on rural land values
- selection of past rural lot sizes
- the location of past rural subdivisions without regard for public good
- the need for access to a reliable supply of irrigation water
- the need to recognise rural industry flexibility of choice of commodity and supplementary irrigation water in defining what is good quality agricultural land
- the imposition of policy constraints on rural users that incur a cost without compensatory means being put in place to address those costs.

To deal with the issue of viability of rural land use in SEQ it is recommended that State and local governments meet with representatives of rural industry and rural communities once the results of water and infrastructure planning are known to address the following:

- the place of profitable rural land use in SEQ
- the location of areas of sustainable rural land use and the appropriateness of planning strategies for protecting such areas
- options available to State and Local Governments to address non-viable rural land use including rural adjustment and offset schemes.

## INSTITUTIONAL, LEGAL AND PROCEDURAL REFORMS

EIANZ-SEQ believes that successful implementation of the Regional Plan is dependent on the State government committing to and making a range of institutional and legal changes to Queensland's planning and development control framework. EIANZ-SEQ believes that the DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN provides little guidance or insight as to how the State Government intends to address these deficiencies.

EIANZ-SEQ notes that the current planning and development control framework, and in particular IPA, has a number of recognised deficiencies that undermine Local Government attempts to promote sustainable development. These stem from its historical origins in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In brief, EIANZ-SEQ understands that the IPA, and concomitant planning and development control framework, was developed in response to:

- rising expectations within the community regarding minimum standards of service and infrastructure provision
- growing diseconomies of scale associated with providing urban infrastructure for low density urban developments in peri-urban regions
- an absence of effective coordinated planning for urban development and infrastructure provision, and the
- expansion of urban development in areas with little pre-existing community infrastructure, necessitating considerable government investment to guarantee adequate provision of infrastructure.

The aim of IPA was to:

- discourage urban sprawl by ensuring that developers paid the true marginal cost of infrastructure provision
- confine future urban development to the areas where it was most cost effective for governments to supply infrastructure
- ensure infrastructure was rolled out in an economically efficient sequence, thereby minimising government debt and outlays
- enable local governments to steer urban development away from environmentally sensitive areas by only providing infrastructure where urban development was least damaging, and charging developers for the additional costs of supplying infrastructure - eventually reducing the need for developers to conduct Environment Impact Statements
- provide land owners and developers with increased certainty, and do away with complex approval processes.

While the stated aim of the Integrated Planning Act (IPA) is to seek to achieve sustainable development, it is clear from the majority of court rulings and determinations of the Department of Local Government and Planning (DLGP) that the major focus of the Act is to:

- ensure that new urban development occurs in sequence with the role out of infrastructure and services by State and local government agencies
- minimise the cost to State and local governments of providing new infrastructure.

Thus relying on IPA as the main legislative instrument to implement the regional plan does not necessarily equate with promoting or facilitating sustainable development. Indeed, the legal definition of sustainable development within IPA is at odds with definitions:

- in other Queensland Acts
- used by the Commonwealth Government and international agencies.

EIANZ-SEQ believes that the successful implementation of the Regional Plan is dependent on a major overhaul of Queensland's urban planning and development control framework and concomitant legislation.

EIANZ-SEQ believes that at the very least the following reforms are needed:

- the aim of the urban planning and development control framework should be unambiguously sustainable development, not just economically efficient infrastructure provision
- the legally ambiguous aim of IPA and the equally legally ambiguous definition of sustainable development within the Act should be amended to ensure that
  - > sustainable development is in fact, and in law, the overriding objective of the framework
  - > the definition of sustainable development within IPA is at least legally equivalent to the definitions contained in other State and Commonwealth laws, and aligns with and supports definitions and meanings of it contained in International Agreements that Australia is a party to.
- the State Government should adopt a policy of no net environmental harm, similar to that operating in other States
- the State Government should amend IPA to legalise the use of market based and other regulatory instruments being trialled in other States and overseas – eg green off-set schemes, biodiversity and emissions trading schemes.
- the ambiguity regarding the use of covenants to protect important environmental assets on free-hold land be removed, and these instruments strengthened so that they provide proper enduring protection for such assets
- IPA and current planning regulations should be amended to unambiguously legalise the imposition by Local Governments of an affordable housing levy, and other similar levies to fund the amelioration of community and environmental impacts associated with urban development
- open space requirements within new urban developments should be amended and expanded to ensure that adequate land is put aside for both social and environmental purposes – at present open space requirements are largely

aimed at ensuring land is put aside for social purposes not environmental ones

- IPA should be systematically amended to ensure that Local Councils and concurrence agencies have the power to set environmentally relevant conditions on developments that relate to more than emissions to the environment (Homel, 1999; Young and Gray, 2000) – such changes would also be needed to successfully implement green offset schemes and other instruments
- the definition of community infrastructure should be expanded to include locally and regionally important environmental and social assets, and local governments should be entitled to include them in the formulation of infrastructure charge plans
- the diverse range of unconnected planning documents that are meant to be influencing planning and development control within SEQ need to be rationalised and brought within the scope of the Regional Plan
- resourcing of the planning and development control functions of Local Government needs to be reviewed – at present the demands of IPA and its concomitant frameworks exceed the logistical and resourcing capacities of most Local Governments
- there needs to be greater coordination among State Government agencies to assist Local Government in their planning and development control functions, and to ensure that Local governments properly deal with matters of State interest.
- there is an urgent need to streamline and expedite the process by which State Planning Policies are created, and IPA needs to be amended to ensure that these instruments take maximum effect immediately they are released.

EIANZ-SEQ believes that while these reforms are the minimum necessary to ensure that Regional Plan is a success, it would be better to establish a major public review of IPA and other relevant State legislation to identify in a considered way the full range of reforms needed to create sustainable development in SEQ.

EIANZ-SEQ strongly supports the need for more effective regional integration and is prepared to contribute its expertise in seeking to achieve this desirable outcome. Regrettably, the draft Regional Plan demonstrates little relationship to the various environmental planning and natural resource management initiatives developed and implemented by State and local governments, regional organisations and other groups in SEQ, and as such may miss the opportunity to be an effective coordinating process. EIANZ-SEQ recommends that the State Government give consideration to the development of legislation specifically to deal with the integration of environmental and natural resource planning.

## TARGETS

At present the DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN contains very few tangible targets. EIANZ-SEQ sees merit in the two that are clearly identified within the DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN:

- per capita water use
- housing density per hectare

However, EIANZ-SEQ does not believe that these are an adequate number of targets. EIANZ-SEQ believes that if the Regional Plan is to be successful it will be necessary to set firm targets concerning a range of policy objectives. These targets should underpin and give guidance to the region's efforts to achieve sustainable development. Such targets would also assist the Court's in making determinations regarding land use and planning conflicts.

EIANZ-SEQ believes that the Regional Plan requires firm targets regarding the following:

- carbon emissions
- the use of renewable energy, both residentially and commercially
- the use of public and private transport
- the amount of environmentally important assets contained within the Public Estate and protected by other instruments
- the amount of environmentally important assets on private land protected by appropriate, effective and enduring legislative instruments
- the degree of connectedness of the reserve and corridor network of the regions NAN
- air and water quality.

## SUSTAINABILITY INDICATORS

EIANZ-SEQ agrees that it is important to have a range of simple and measurable sustainability indicators. EIANZ-SEQ believes that these indicators should:

- relate to targets set by the Regional Plan
- enable the Government and the Community to assess the implementation of the Regional Plan
- provide meaningful information to planners, managers and the general community regarding where effort should be expended.

EIANZ-SEQ does not believe that the range of sustainability indicators within the DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN satisfies these requirements. In particular, EIANZ-SEQ does not believe that they will provide adequate information and guidance regarding the region's environmental sustainability.

EIANZ-SEQ is supportive of the preliminary list of sustainability indicators in Table 4 of the DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN, and requests that they be expanded and clarified further in the final Regional Plan. In particular, EIANZ-SEQ believes that the various indicators should be 'nested' under several broad goals (eg. an urban form which is demonstrably more sustainable socially, ecologically and economically than the quarter acre block suburbs of the past) and divided into:

- broad indicators for regularly monitoring the effectiveness of the Regional Plan
- State of the Environment (SoE) report indicators for periodic 'snapshots' of a wide range of environmental and sustainability parameters
- performance criteria against which local government planning schemes may be evaluated.

EIANZ-SEQ believes that at the very least the following indicators should be adopted and reported against:

- total energy consumption of the region, and in each sector
- level of renewable energy as a proportion of total energy consumption
- net carbon emissions
- Gross Regional Product per capita divided by
  - > Total energy consumption
  - > Renewable energy consumption
  - > level of net carbon emissions
  - > water consumption
- level of connectivity of the region's NAN and Public Estate – including the degree to which the region is connected east to west, and north to south
- the area of private land covered by conservation management agreements of various kinds



- the area of Public Estate (including Council-owned freehold land managed for conservation/recreation) within the Urban Footprint, as well as in the Landscape and Rural Production Area, and the percentage of the total land that is considered in the NAN
- the area of each Endangered/Of Concern Regional Ecosystem protected by tenure or planning constraints
- the number of species considered to be 'at risk' (endangered/vulnerable) at sub-regional level and
- any known or suspected local extinctions.

## CONCLUSION

EIANZ-SEQ believes that the State Government's efforts to address the growth pressures within SEQ are long overdue and urgently needed. EIANZ-SEQ finds merit in many of the proposals contained within the DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN, and wishes to support the Government in their efforts.

However, EIANZ-SEQ believes that as it currently stands the DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN does not provide the full framework needed to generate sustainable development in SEQ. Rather the DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN echoes old thinking and approaches to the efficient and timely provision of infrastructure for urban development. While these are laudable aims, this focus will not in itself lead to the sustainable development of SEQ.

This submission has outlined the range of:

- critical issues that the EIANZ-SEQ believes have been neglected so far by the DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN
- actions that the EIANZ-SEQ believes need to be included in and promoted by the Regional Plan
- reforms needed to ensure its success

EIANZ-SEQ believes that it is essential that the Regional Plan focus primarily on achieving sustainable regional development, and provide the framework by which the SEQ:

- responds to climate change and meets its emerging international responsibilities
- protects and utilises its environmental assets and ecosystem services
- develops the institutional, legal and procedural capacities to develop sustainably, and maintain its prosperity throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

EIANZ-SEQ looks forward to working with the State Government on these matters.

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# APPENDIX A:

## SEQ REGIONAL PLAN - STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL SCORECARD

### Introduction

The Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand South East Queensland Division's principal objective is to foster a vision of achieving sustainability through environmental excellence.

The SEQ Division formed a project committee to evaluate and prepare a response to the Draft South East Queensland Regional Plan. This project committee has prepared a response in the format of a Strategic Environmental Scorecard of its likely environmental impacts using a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) approach.

The project committee has collectively undertaken an SEA of the Regional Plan. The assessment is qualitative only and is based on the information contained within the Draft Regional Plan and the knowledge and experience of those individuals undertaking the assessment

## Draft South East Queensland Regional Plan -EIANZ SEQ Strategic Environmental Assessment Scorecard

Scores	Meaning
–	negative impact
0	neutral impact
+	positive impact

Indicator	Score	Supporting Notes
<b>Environmental</b>		
Open Space Recreation, Scenic Amenity, Rural Production	0	<p>The Draft Regional Plan has defined a Regional Landscape and Rural Production Area that is to be protected from further urban encroachment, however the Draft Plan lacks strategies to manage and ensure protection of this area. Areas of high scenic amenity are to be protected, but again little direction is provided to effectively identify or ensure protection of high scenic values.</p> <p>The Urban Footprint Area is likely to pressure inner city open space, scenic values and recreational opportunities. No guidance is provided to preserve or manage the areas of regional significance within the Urban Footprint. Local Government controls and management are inconsistent across the region.</p> <p>The Draft Plan contains no Rural Futures Strategy. The economy of the rural and agricultural pursuits in the Rural Landscape and Rural Production areas needs to be nurtured and managed with the objective of sustainability at each level - economic, social and ecological.</p>

Indicator	Score	Supporting Notes
<b>Environmental cont.</b>		
Nature Conservation Landscape, Coastal Waterways, Biodiversity	+	<p>The Draft Plan proposes to restrict development in ecologically sensitive coastal areas. This is to be achieved through the enforcement of urban development in the Urban Footprint Area only. This is considered a significant benefit to the values of coastal areas in South East Queensland.</p> <p>Unfortunately, the Draft Plan contains no specific management strategies for biodiversity. It also fails to address areas of national and international conservation value and significance, or to provide guidance for local government in balancing denser development with protection of environmental assets and ecosystem services within the Urban Footprint.</p>
Natural Resources Land, Water Supply and Use, Energy	–	<p>The Draft Plan contains limited management strategies for the prudent use of natural resources. The Draft Plan seems to rely on external documents and processes for natural resource protection, processes over which it is likely to have limited influence and may in fact be counter-productive in some important aspects.</p> <p>There seems to be a heavy reliance on infrastructure delivery to accommodate projected population increases.</p> <p>Denser development of the Urban Footprint, on its own, has the potential to exacerbate demand for water and energy. No targets for regional demand management are provided for water supply / use or energy.</p>
Air Quality	–	<p>The Draft Plan addresses the modelling and monitoring of the South East Queensland airshed, but provides no planning targets or management strategies. Denser development of the Urban Footprint, on its own, has the potential to reduce air quality. There has been no consideration of the potential impacts on the airshed from the proposed alternative or Preferred Patterns of Development. This is a fundamental requirement to ensuring that the Regional Plan delivers on the projected quality of life indicators, including air quality.</p>

Indicator	Score	Supporting Notes
<b>Social</b>		
Community Planning  Urban Form, Consultation, Regional Activity	—	<p>The Draft Regional Plan is likely to have a significant impact on local government planning processes as it's responsibilities for many of the management strategies in the Plan are the responsibilities of local government. The level of consultation in preparing the Draft Plan was limited and likely acceptance of local impacts of the Regional Plan by the community is likely to be low.</p> <p>Many existing community values (such as space, vegetated suburbs) are likely to be negatively impacted upon by more compact urban forms. Moreover, differing standards for planning, designing and constructing large subdivisions is common in South East Queensland and likely to result in varying quality of community developments. The fundamental assumption in the Draft Plan that the 'market' and the community will change to accommodate more compact urban forms is optimistic, at best. The assumption in the Draft Plan that State Government services will support planning, patterns of development and community needs is critical to the successful implementation of the Plan. However the Plan does not commit State Government agencies to deliver the Plan, nor commit resources for agencies or local governments for effective delivery.</p>
Demographic Change  Retirement, Occupancy Rates, Family Structure	—	<p>The Draft Plan does not adequately address through key strategies the significant issue of the major shifts in population demographics. Strategies for developing regional centres aim to be inclusive of various social demographic needs. Occupancy rates are declining, however the Draft Plan does not provide strategies for increased support infrastructure. The Draft Plan provides management strategies for a range of key issues such as affordable housing, but lacks strong implementation guidelines or reference to their need.</p>
Rural Communities	—	<p>The Draft Plan cites many initiatives to assist rural communities and improve engagement and capacity building processes. These are considered statements of intent rather than strategies, given that there are no stated actions for implementation.</p>

Indicator	Score	Supporting Notes
<b>Economic</b>		
Transport Integration, Connectivity, Access, Efficiency	+	<p>Transport orientated development (TOD) is considered an important strategy to achieve a number of environmental, social and economic outcomes. The Draft Plan supports TODs and a wide range of initiatives to improve transport efficiency and integration, but specifically how it will do this is not evident. The proposed alignment of transport plans and implementation programs is considered a significant strategy that would achieve more sustainable outcomes.</p> <p>The provision of high quality local and intra - regional public transport services is critical for the efficient movement of a growing population, but will require specific strategies currently not present in the Draft Plan. The stated intention to allocate more population to the Western Corridor will depend on efficient public transport linking employment centres with residences, within sub catchments (the principle of self - containment) Similarly, investment in other infrastructure and services that support the preferred pattern of development will be required.</p>
The Economy Diversity, Productivity, Infrastructure, Accessibility	-	<p>The Draft Plan outlines strategies for a diverse and knowledge-based economy, however the strategies appear to be to develop more strategies. Strategies outlining the strengthening of the viability and productivity of rural areas are provided in the Draft Plan, however this is considered a difficult task for the State Government to play. Local government, stakeholder groups and consumers are an important factor in achieving this.</p> <p>Attracting private sector investment in capital is important for the region and is noted as a strategy in the Draft Plan. Similarly, the attraction of employment opportunities in planning and developing new urban areas is a key success factor in achieving a more sustainable pattern of development. The Draft Plan lacks a fundamental appreciation of how the Western Corridor employment centres are to be established against economic development trends for the region and specific implementation actions in this regard.</p>

Indicator	Score	Supporting Notes
<b>Economic cont.</b>		
<p>Infrastructure and Services</p> <p>Regional Growth, Infrastructure Coordination, Funding, Water Supply</p>	0	<p>Identifying and prioritising key infrastructure projects to support the Regional Plan are considered a key strategy for the State Government to coordinate and implement. The coordination of numerous government agencies and integration with Local Government delivery is likely to be a challenge. Firm commitment to implement the Plan is required from the State Government. The commitment must demonstrate how the SEQ Infrastructure Plan and Program will be developed, funded, implemented and monitored.</p> <p>The protection of key transport corridors for future strategic development is supported and considered an important strategy. Strategies outlined for water cycle management, regional water management and energy are supported but concern is expressed over the likelihood of such strategies practically being implemented given the diversity of responsibilities for such strategies, many of which fall outside the influence of the OUM.</p>



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