

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN  
MACKAY WHITSUNDAY ISAAC  
2014 - 2024

# OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

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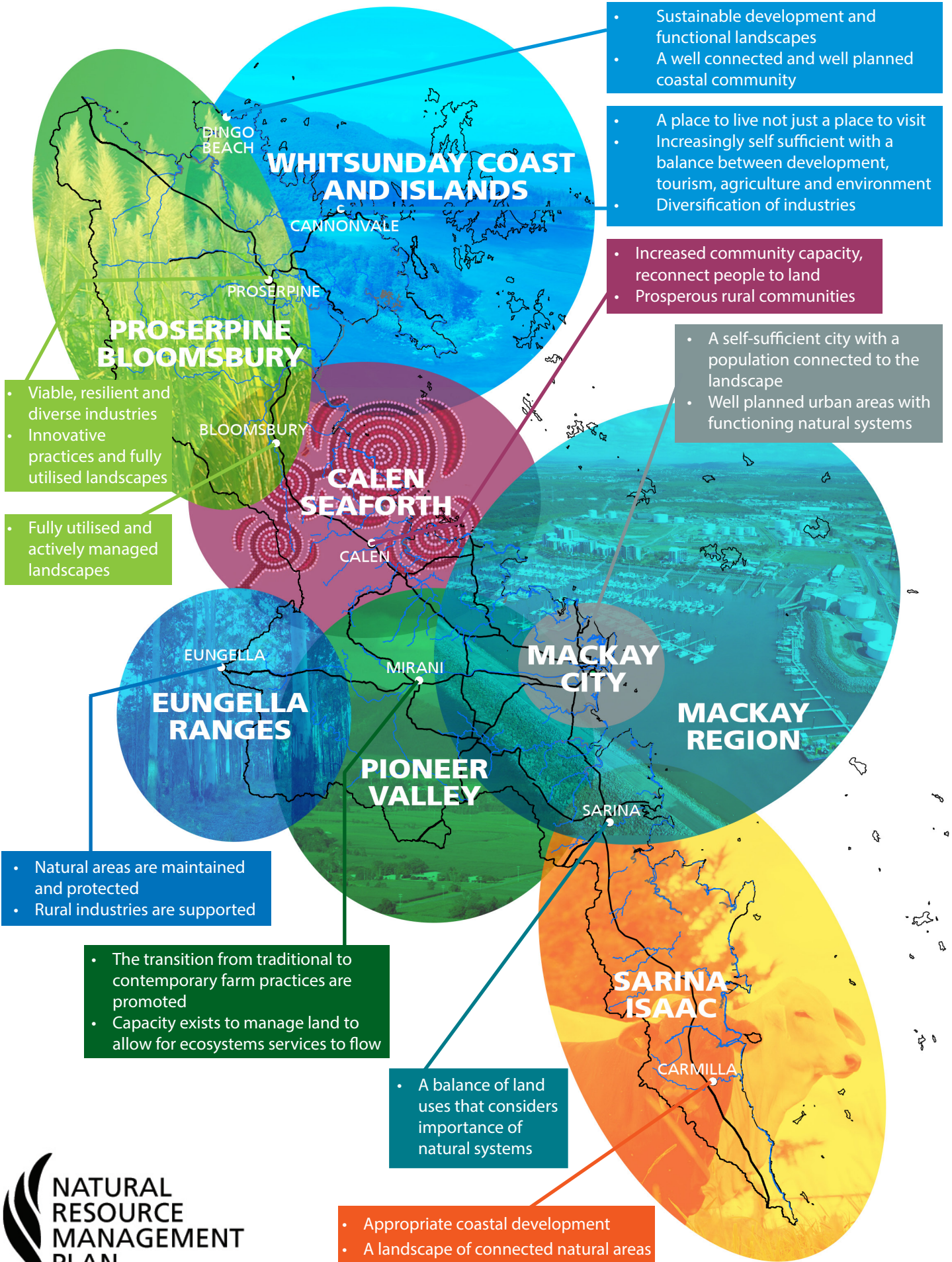
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NATURAL  
RESOURCE  
MANAGEMENT  
PLAN

MACKAY WHITSUNDAY ISAAC

# LANDSCAPES AND KEY VISIONS





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN  
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NRM PLAN – THE APPROACH.....	4
STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION.....	4
SUMMARY AND OUTCOMES.....	5
What valuable things do our landscapes provide for us?.....	5
What positive changes have occurred in the landscape?.....	5
What negative changes have occurred?.....	5
How do you want the landscape to look in the future?.....	6
What do we need to make this happen?.....	6
APPENDIX 1	
Open Public Consultation Details.....	7
1.1 Bloomsbury 28 January 2014.....	8
1.2 Cannonvale 29 January 2014.....	11
1.3 Calen 3 February 2014.....	14
1.4 Sarina 4 February 2014.....	17
1.5 Carmilla 5 February 2014.....	19
1.6 Pioneer Valley 6 February 2014.....	21
1.7 Eungella 7 February 2014.....	23
1.8 Mackay 19 February 2014.....	25
1.9 Proserpine 21 February 2014.....	28
2.0 Dingo Beach 22 February 2014.....	31



## NRM PLAN – THE APPROACH

A new NRM Plan for MWI region is being developed to succeed the original NRM Plan 2005-2008, and updated NRM Plan 2008-2013.

The focus of the new NRM Plan 2014-2024 is:

- An informed approach – using the best available knowledge and science which formed the basis of a ‘State of Region Report’ (2013);
- A landscapes approach – dividing the region into 8 overlapping socio-ecological landscapes that are relevant to the people that live there and have distinct characteristics, values, challenges and opportunities. Please note that any reference hereafter to ‘landscapes’ is in line with this definition;
- A truly collaborative approach – engaging with stakeholders throughout the process and developing the plan in collaboration with community members, key industry groups, government representatives and other organisations, so that the Plan is all encompassing, representative and owned by the MWI community.

## STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

To capture the community’s views and aspirations, 10 open public consultation meetings were held across the MWI region in population centers corresponding with the landscapes approach (cover image).

The format of the meetings was a brief presentation by Reef Catchments staff to set the scene and inform of the planning process, followed by a group discussion guided by several open ended questions, as captured in the following ‘Summary and Outcomes’ section.

In total, 45 people participated in the open public meetings and all expressed interest in being involved further in the planning process and review a copy of the draft NRM Plan in June 2014.

A diversity of community members attended including landholders, graziers, growers, small block owners and urban dwellers. Many had been in the area their whole lives, with several third and fourth generation residents attending, which was balanced with participation from people who had just moved to the area.

For those who were unable to attend public meetings, similar questions posed during consultation were made available on the Reef Catchments website, where many submissions were received.

## SUMMARY AND OUTCOMES

### WHAT VALUABLE THINGS DO OUR LANDSCAPES PROVIDE FOR US?

During open public meetings, participants were not hesitant in explaining what has attracted them to live or remain in their local areas. Common themes included the climate, productive agricultural land, enviable lifestyle including recreational opportunities, the people, and proximity to attractions such as Eungella National Park and the Great Barrier Reef.

During discussion, many participants elaborated and values emerged regarding the services provided by functioning ecosystems, such as access to good quality water, clean air and healthy, fertile soil. It was also noted several times that having a diversity of industries to support the region was valuable in remaining resilient to changes and challenges.

### WHAT POSITIVE CHANGES HAVE OCCURRED IN THE LANDSCAPE?

The emerging theme of this section across all landscapes was improved management practices and opportunities, including better access to invasive species control, fire management, beach and marine debris collection and new technologies that allow farmers to better manage land.

There was mention of some increase in native species, which was perceived to be symptomatic of a healthy landscape. Anecdotal evidence was also given that suggested landscapes in some areas were improving, for example clarity of water in some creeks. The resilience of landscapes was also raised, as many areas have 'sprang back' from emerging pressures and events, such as the Eungella rainforest following Cyclone Ului.

Many participants in rural areas considered the concentration of development in urban or regional centres as beneficial, in that while changes continue to occur remotely, they are less rapid and dramatic so far. Better services and improved access to services was raised as a positive change in a region that is growing quickly.

### WHAT NEGATIVE CHANGES HAVE OCCURRED?

While many participants were able to appreciate the positive aspects of population growth and urban development, likewise many were concerned at the pace, scale and nature of development in their communities. The consensus across the region was that good models exist for accommodating growth, and that it can happen without compromising the integrity, character and function of the existing landscapes.

Numerous related changes were raised, such as encroachment of the built environment on good quality productive agricultural land, and the division of small rural lots or 'hobby farms' and the ensuing land management issues of 'part-time farmers', such as inconsistencies in control of invasive species, wildfire, and erosion.

The decreasing viability of agricultural production was a key theme, with farmers' primary concern being succession as it is difficult to attract or retain workers and family when better career opportunities exist nearby, most notably in the mines.

Another negative change (related to population growth, increase in small block owners, and decrease in farm viability) was community capacity and the decline in community cohesiveness. Related problems include loss of knowledge about land management, a lack of empathy with regard to environmental concerns, and a regional disconnect between residents and the landscapes in which they live.

Governance emerged as a negative change with a perception that more red tape existed creating barriers to good, proactive land management, and lack of enforcement toward those not managing land to the defined standards.

Other negative changes include environmental degradation such as erosion and increase in some invasive species and feral animal issues.

## HOW DO YOU WANT THE LANDSCAPE TO LOOK IN THE FUTURE?

Although the participant's visions reflected each distinct landscape, they were united in the following aspirations:

- Balance – A balance of land uses exist including agriculture, urban and infrastructure, tourism, protected areas and functioning ecosystems. Visions for the region are strategic and long-term;
- Community capacity – Communities are connected to their landscapes, with access to knowledge to manage land, and a meaningful stake in decision making processes;
- Resilient, sustainable communities – Development is collaboratively and well planned, communities are resilient to boom and bust cycles, and are self sufficient (food, energy, industry). Young people are attracted to live and work here;
- Fully utilised and actively managed land – Land is used according to best multiple benefits that goes beyond purely economics, including use of by-products. People have access to incentives to manage land to the best of their abilities.

## WHAT DO WE NEED TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

Despite the challenges the participants outlined, they were forthcoming with potential ways to achieve the collective vision for their landscapes. Again, while solutions, tools and potential interventions varied across landscapes, the following common suggestions emerged:

- Strategic and collaborative planning and management – Systems approach, considering all perspectives and working together for most viable, appropriate and sustainable outcomes. Support communities to take part in, understand, and ultimately have ownership of the future of the region;
- Build community capacity - connect people to the land, share knowledge, involve people in decision making, educate, empower communities to make decisions, create foci for fostering community e.g. community gardens;
- Innovation and diversification – Continue to promote best management and innovative practices, encourage diversification of industry to enable resilience;
- Promote adaptability and resilience to changes – including options for farming succession planning and adaptability to changes, for example the climate. Restore and protect key habitats, ensure development is appropriate, support all industries to function, become more sustainable e.g. produce own food.

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# OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS APPENDIX





## VALUES

### SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL MANAGEMENT

Example used of clearing, they do not clear 100% because they understand the value of leaving trees for erosion control and cycling nutrients to keep soil healthy. Clearing of lantana, notice biodiversity benefits (turkeys, wallabies, improved condition of land). Feel penalised for doing the right thing as clearing permits are difficult to obtain. Have changed grazing methods now to have thicker grass to stop the germination of weed species.

### WATER

Importance noted for stock and domestic water, the need to look after this.

### LAND

Always out in the bush. Friends come and camp on the creek. Don't appreciate your own land until people come to visit. Other people rely on NPs but they don't need to visit NPs.

### NATURAL AREAS

Recognised the value in natural areas and used and managed these on their own properties for recreational activities for family and friends

## CHALLENGES

### UNMANAGED OR POORLY MANAGED NEIGHBOURING LAND

Neighbours and/or small hobby farmers, and areas such as the land that is between QR and main roads. No ownership. Enforcement of regulations re declared pests by LG unequal between lifestylers & farmers.

### INVASIVE SPECIES

Mention of wild dogs, pigs, lantana and rats tail grass. Lack of washdown facilities & service vehicles (DNRM, Ergon) spreading weeds such as sicklepod, snake weed

### LEGISLATIVE RESTRICTIONS

For clearing, building dams etc

Changes in legislation but no service provided by enforcement agency (DNRM re changes to veg clearing) in understanding changes

## CHANGES (POSITIVE)

### MANY LANDHOLDERS BETTER EQUIPPED TO MANAGE LAND

Rural fire team, now have equipment to respond quickly to fire. QR are better at slashing. Easier to get everyone together to fight fires.

More wild dog baiting programs and pig traps supplied. It's harder now because you have to get signatures permissions to bait, but DNR are good helping.

## CHANGES (NEGATIVE)

### INVASIVE SPECIES

Pigs and birds have to go somewhere to hide, they go to the forestry. As soon as Cathu burns, wild dogs increase and are getting worse.



Small landholders do not control weeds as well. Weeds spread with vehicle movements. They spend a lot of \$\$ on control.

Lifestyle blocks - they know about weeds etc but they don't have knowledge or desire to control.

## SMALL BLOCK HOLDERS INCREASING

Necessity isn't there for small landholders and hobby farmers who work in town to manage land to same standard. More small blocks appearing, makes fire control harder, when people aren't around to help out.

Small hobby farmers you don't see for 18 months and they don't see value in burning. Don't have confidence to do it, no background to use fire for management.

## IRREGULARITY OF WEATHER AND CONSEQUENCES (FIRE MANAGEMENT) (SINCE 1971)

"One thing I notice is the storms, once upon a time you'd have storm corridors and there would be a pattern of storms, but the patters doesn't happen like it used to. You used to get one storm and then a few after but now you just get a general rain, or not any. You don't get storm rain like you used to" (Leo).

Implication for fire management – you can control burning when storms are more regular. Fire is still used as a major tool for land management.

## BUSINESS IN DECLINE

Business worsens as input costs increase such as power and diesel for irrigation, chemicals etc. Tried really hard to cut down on usage with shielded sprayers and green cane harvesting. Profitability - it's a dime.

Hard to get labour, these little towns all used to be railway towns. There's not enough \$ to employ people. When Darren left school there were several staff, now his dad works alone.

"I'm not getting no younger" - Leon.

"You don't do it for the lifestyle, there isn't much of a lifestyle!" Darren

## VISION FOR THE FUTURE

### MAINTAINING AND SUSTAINING DIVERSITY IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

Got to have a bit of everything, a good mix. Invest in existing land uses, like Laguna Quays which was like an oasis back in the day, would like to see it revitalised. Feeling they are losing everything. Smaller schools and shops and are getting closed down. Population decreasing.

Fully utilised and actively managed landscapes.

Cathu forest used to be good for recreation (camping), but it's just a motorbike track now.

### NEED SUPPORT AND INCENTIVES TO MANAGE LAND WELL, GREATER IMPLICATIONS FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT

Would like to see freehold less heavily policed to give them a chance of making a living, need more support to improve land.

Lucky with Reef Catchments support, need more similar incentives to do well.

## HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

### MORE SUPPORT AND TRANSPARENCY

More contact with decision makers to help make them understand the decisions farmers make. Get rid of red tape.

## IMPROVED CROSS-REGIONAL LAND MANAGEMENT

More wash down units to prevent weed spread. Continue to access support of rural fires service.

## GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Landholders felt there had been a change in the climate but recognised that they could not prove it without their own long term records.

Observed changes in weather patterns were often contradicted because they remember similar patterns in the past.

Landholders recognised the poorly utilised country and infrastructure in Cathu State Forest and Laguna Quays Resort

## VALUES

### LIFESTYLE AND COMMUNITY

Area has incredible scenery and attracts people from the south with an enviable active and outdoor lifestyle. Tight knit communities where everyone knows everyone. New people bring positivity to the area (even if they do leave 12 months later).

### NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Visual amenity, seemingly pristine natural environment. The view as you drive over Airlie Hill mentioned.

### PRODUCTIVE AREA

Area perceived to be productive and lucrative in terms of agriculture and tourism.

## CHALLENGES

### INVASIVE SPECIES

Lantana mentioned

### DEVELOPMENT

Including habitat destruction and impact on community

## CHANGES (POSITIVE)

### POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT AND ACCESS TO SERVICES

Bike paths and board walks give new access to certain areas, some positive development such as the Lagoon for year round swimming. The geography is against much activity (mud flats, steep hills etc) so it's good they make alternative activities. There are more services in the area, previously Proserpine was the commercial centre.

### IMPROVED ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Example given of green cane harvesting, trash blankets and reduced cane burning regimes and improved emissions control from the mill operation. "Used to have mounds of ash everywhere".

### CULTURAL SHIFTS TOWARD ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Removal of debris by Ecobarge has been positive. Be interesting to see if they are getting better or getting worse slower... A positive culture is spreading about picking litter and never walking past a bottle top. Need to work on the life cycle of plastic contamination from producers, consumers, recyclers as well as clean up activities.

## CHANGES (NEGATIVE)

### CLIMATE CHANGE

Monsoon happening later and is shorter, and it seems hotter than before. It used to start end of November until February and interrupt the cane harvest, now there is a big gap between them finishing the crush and the rain beginning in January/February (NB: good data might exist from crush). Huge uncertainty about seasons, unpredictable.

### NEGATIVE DEVELOPMENT

The rate and nature of development is too great; 15 years ago Airlie was a sleepy town which one

participant preferred ("I preferred the old Airlie to the new Airlie"). Habitat destruction due to development has destroyed trees and mangroves where species lived. Example of Muddy Bay (Port of Airlie) that was a community hub where families would fish with nets.

"All those beautiful mangroves that were filled with life, taken away and for what. Some marina that benefits a few and not the majority".

Byron Bay used as example of good model for development.

## VISION FOR THE FUTURE

### MAINTAIN BUT DIVERSIFY AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Area has a good mix of cane and beef, agriculture seen as positive for area and economy and to extend the environment as farmers have a vested interest in healthy land.

Potential to grow and sell food locally, niche to produce organic foods, shorter food miles, more sustainable local productive markets. Idea that the community should be able to support itself and not be dependent on tourism, mining and other boom and bust cycling industries.

Need a balance of productive and natural areas.

### CONNECTIVITY AND PROTECTION OF NATURAL AREAS

Connectivity between parks, it would be good to walk between parks. Very few people would say there are too many parks, could always do with more.

National parks should be more conscious of developing more walking tracks as there are adequate walking paths already.

Scope for more informative/interpretive signage.

### LIMIT DEVELOPMENT

Unanimously do not want further development. Coastal vegetation seen as a "habitat for life, no more should be taken out".

Belief that the land between Cannonvale and Proserpine is under threat from intensive development and that it will link up one day. Greater velocity of urban water run-off from hard surfaces and knock on effects, council will have to create infrastructure to repeat what nature can do anyway. Heat islands.

Not good to say out of 74 islands, 64 are National Parks, that makes development on mainland okay.

(NB: Tourism downturn perceived as positive because it gives the islands and reef a rest environmentally).

## HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

### MAINTAIN AND SUPPORT AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIES

Keep good quality agricultural land in agriculture. There used to be so much more grazing land.

"They've moved agriculture to make way for tacky houses, where is the run off going? To the reef?"

Council has plans, but these are always on the side of the developer.

Get more involved with the schools, it starts with the kids

### GREATER COMMUNITY AWARENESS

"How do you wake up the community to these issues? It all starts with community. We are the driving force so we need to all wake up."



Engage and educate community in natural environment, reconnect the general community with the natural environment. We don't invest enough time and effort in younger people. Need to get into the schools.

## GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

- Need to capitalise on the enthusiasm and positivity of those moving here to change the place for the better.
- Such a productive agricultural environment should not have to import vast amounts of food to support the tourist and domestic population
- A place to live not just a place to visit
- Increasingly self sufficient with a balance between development, tourism, agriculture and environment
- Diversification of industries

## VALUES

### PRODUCTIVE AGRICULTURAL LAND

Sustains the region, livelihoods, culture, identity, heritage

### LIFESTYLE AND NATURAL ATTRACTIONS

Tourism areas such as St Helens and Camerons Pocket are enjoyable recreation areas with beautiful scenery (pristine relative to surrounding areas), nice to live nearby, and draw tourists for festivals that occur there.

### FORESTRY

Timber reserves. Exist and are undervalued as a viable land use with good economic and environmental returns.

## CHALLENGES

### ENGAGEMENT AND RECONNECTION BETWEEN PEOPLE AND LANDSCAPE

The division of rural blocks for hobby farming where knowledge of environment is less, and less time is spent managing land.

### PLANNING FOR FUTURE OF REGION

Awareness that coal has a lifespan and Mackay will become a town with an ageing population and fewer economic drivers in the future.

### DEGRADATION OF ENVIRONMENT

As a result of inappropriate development which encroaches on agricultural land, causes erosion and contributes to water quality issues (accelerated runoff mentioned)

## CHANGES (POSITIVE)

### BETTER LAND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES OCCURRING

Good management of cane land where farmers have done a good job and demonstrated capacity to adapt and change. For example, cross-property pig control over 3 year period made 'huge difference'.

### IMPROVED ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Water is clearer in areas.

## CHANGES (NEGATIVE)

### CHANGES IN LAND USE

Good farmland has been divided into rural lots, taking good quality land out of production. This is seen as being an inefficient use of land. Related to legislation; people only move to the country and need 5 acres, not 20. Huge fragmentation.

Cathu State Forest 'is a mess' as forestry has regressed with some forestry machinery still left in paddocks 5 years later.

When Harold was young there was beautiful Mackay Cedar there but they were destroyed to replace with pine trees. Frustration on ban on logging, areas logged for 100 years and when done properly it is unrecognizable as logged land.

## INVASIVE SPECIES

Changes. More pigs, cockatoos, swamp hens – all eat cane. Native and feral pests, more of them. More lantana, more weed species. Used to burn everything out cane. But now you can't green burn weeds are increasing.

## ECONOMIES OF PRODUCTION

Increased cost of production in agriculture means farmers "have to get bigger or get out".

Sugar mills rely on volume and capacity is not being met.

Racecourse and Farleigh mills – use close and far cane to average out costs. Now they are building more houses around the mill so that puts more expense on mills for haulage costs. Having to increase infrastructure to support distance to cane and population.

Industry needs to address that tonnes/ha has dropped and the sustainability has been reduced.

## CHANGING CLIMATE

Noticeably higher tides (anecdotal - 15 years ago we could have BBQ by the creek, now that gets surrounded on the high tide).

Frank – it's not as cold as it was when they were younger. There haven't been as many frosts. But again it isn't that much hotter. Mango farmer – the heat sum (high-low difference) has changed so trees come into flower earlier. Wet season is variable – you get dries and wets. Can remember fighting fires in January so prolonged dries are not unusual.

Not getting early rains in November that we once were. Getting heavier rain now? Can't decide, too hard to say.

## VISION FOR THE FUTURE

### PROTECT AND DIVERSIFY PRODUCTIVE LAND

Still a viable cattle farming area, seek to make the most of land and strike a balance so that the community can survive 'after the coal industry'.

Should be able to make so many more products from cane, not just cane. Vaccines, pharmaceuticals. Science will allow us to advance and move beyond cane. Return on investment is keeping us from progressing at this stage.

Coal and gas considered a threat in the area with a seam that runs from Kuttabul to north of Pindi Pindi. Desire to keep this undeveloped.

"What we don't want to see is as important as what we do."

### PROSPEROUS RURAL COMMUNITIES

Need to maintain and develop local services to enable people to live in areas like Calen.

## HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

### RECONNECT PEOPLE WITH LANDSCAPES

Newcomers should get involved i.e. volunteer. Always the same people taking an active interest; need to understand rural community and take part in it.

Need to do more work in education in general, one participant did not know how to control lantana for example. Landcare do not have time or money, need to seek a new solution.

Risk of fire and lack of knowledge mentioned. Fear of losing capacity to use fire as a tool.

## ACHIEVE A BALANCE

Keep some places without development, in particular the beach area. Seaforth development is 'getting out of hand'. Need to maintain balance of coast, lifestyles, small acreages in appropriate areas.

Wasting time and money trying to rehabilitate certain areas, need to restrict development to certain areas.

Better tourism development, roadways into water holes will become busier, respect is being lost for places. Need to better manage.

## GOOD QUALITY ECOSYSTEMS AND RELATED SERVICES (EG: WATER)

Future water availability, especially for Mackay. Options for St Helens and Murray to be dammed. Will be needed for increase in population. Capacity for population growth and inevitability of dry spells.

Good quality and quantity of water supply needed.



## VALUES

### ECOSYSTEMS SERVICES

Example of creek running through block which owner has fenced off to increase production on land. Observed water quality values and a corridor for wildlife (links to climate change adaptation).

### NATURAL BEAUTY AND LIFESTYLE

Sarina beach resident – overlook the ocean, mangrove, and inland. Enjoyment of nature.

## CHALLENGES

### ENGAGEMENT AND RECONNECTION OF PEOPLE AND ENVIRONMENT

People do not look beyond own back yard. Lack of capacity within the community which is comprised of retirees and peri-urban/rural residential.

“People value the region but they don’t realize that they value it, or what it is they value”.

## CHANGES (POSITIVE)

### CULTURAL TRENDING TOWARD BETTER ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

People are more aware of value of foreshore

Good practice occurring such as picking up litter on the beach. Growth in interest in native gardens in last 20 years, and planning for drier seasons so you don’t have to use so much water.

Bird population in Sarina, since 1988 it’s a better bird population because people moved to planting native vegetation.

### HEALTH OF ENVIRONMENT HAS IMPROVED IN AREAS

Example of sea grass beds doing quite well (contributed by participant who was part of monitoring project).

## CHANGES (NEGATIVE)

### CHANGING DYNAMIC OF LAND MANAGEMENT AND THE ‘TRADITIONAL FARMER’

(NB: Not outlined as good or bad) Sarina area, farming communities strong to the south, Sarina is becoming more urbanized as it is close enough to Mackay.

Negative: The more concrete, the more run off.

(Discussed more negatively) Part-time farmers, another facet that is changing, bigger blocks being managed by people working in Mackay.

“You’ve got miners and mill workers trying to be farmers”.

### INVASIVE SPECIES INCREASE

More weeds but people don’t know they are weeds. But people can like weeds, they are not seen as weeds and if they aren’t doing any harm, and some native weeds can be pests.

Pigs bad in the valley. Dogs been knocked by 1080. Hard to get programs when permits for 1080 has to go across all small block holders.

Less native bees, used to be more rock wallabies but now too many people.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

Changes – more trees in Isaac. Sarina pictures of grandfathers block, increase in trees. Changing fire regimes. Relates to changing nature of farming community and farming areas becoming more populated.

The beach has suffered erosion.

## VISION FOR THE FUTURE

### BALANCE

Balance, nice to live, production, need to manage balance. Need to have productive areas used for production, tourism for tourism, nature for nature etc (beach plans do good job).

### CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

People look at the environment and don't see it, need to better promote environment and plan for how it is used into the future with people who live there.

## HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

### CONTINUE TO IMPROVE LAND MANAGEMENT PRACTICE

Ensure industries are sustainable. Protect European and Aboriginal heritage values.

Use the environment sustainably, leave only a necessary sized footprint, let other things that have a right to be here too, don't take it back to 1877, just don't destroy what we need.

### DIFFERENT APPROACH – STRATEGIC, SYSTEMS

Need something that looks at whole system, I only see my block, I would need someone to look across all the blocks to understand how it all works. Need to work at a broader scale than individual scale.

Understanding how it all links together. Need to collaborate through all levels of Gov and community.

Need to be more strategic in how we manage whole landscapes.

### INCREASE COMMUNITY CAPACITY AND AWARENESS OF NRM

Technology. Citizens science to do more monitoring. Community capacity. Community gardens and horticultural production.

Should put % into natural areas of properties to maintain own resources. Should do it voluntary, or via incentives rather than legislation.

How you develop an awareness? Good example in Europe, community becomes willing to support farmer to leave areas un-farmed, tax payer takes responsibility. This has happened, reimbursement for leaving areas untouched, land stewardship.

We look at land like it has to produce something, and bigger is better. We don't understand where things come from.

Peri-urban, golden opportunity for landcare groups, need support and guidance. Education is key. Turning cane blocks into peri-urban blocks.

Farmers find it hard in drought, need to flog country to stay afloat. How farmers are forced to farm to make a living.

## VALUES

### ISAAC IDENTITY

Part of coastal stretch of Isaac, people in this local landscape identify with the coastal of Isaac. Value beaches such as Yarrowonga Beach and the coastal strip from Illbillie to St Lawrence.

### LIFESTYLE

Small block owners with environmental consciousness, value the lifestyle that this affords them and the climate (good rainfall, sunshine)

### ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES

Values include the tidal creeks, mangrove ecosystems, lots of wildlife – ‘every kind of bird you can imagine’. Wetlands mentioned as a key value, including the cultural value of fish traps.

## CHALLENGES

### INAPPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT

Clairview used as an example, no feasible option other than getting people to move from coastal area because of erosion. Developments have caused coastal erosion due to removal of casuarinas. Tide is ‘almost in houses’.

New ‘Eco-Resort’ ear marked for development in floodplain area which is not deemed sensible given the weather seems more extreme and king tides threaten that area.

### SMALL BLOCK OWNERS

Most blocks are purchased and cleared and FIFO/DIDO part-time land managers come to run quad bikes and too many cattle, eroding the land and creating mud and noise pollution.

## CHANGES (POSITIVE)

### WILDLIFE

In 11 years participant noticed fewer cane toads and more keel backs. Haven’t seen so many wild dogs.

### WILDLIFE CORRIDOR

Well managed small blocks can act as nature refugia and connect in tact natural areas.

“Our block is wonderful, so many trees and so much wildlife has returned”.

### RESTORATION

Carmilla Beach mentioned as a more healthy area that has been revegetated. It is unique because camp sites and toilets have been set up there, helping to focus activity rather than have unmanaged beaches.

## CHANGES (NEGATIVE)

### FRAGMENTATION OF LANDSCAPE

Attributed to the mining boom and purchase of multiple small blocks by people with little knowledge of environmental values.

### BAD LAND MANAGEMENT

Isaac represents a transit point and the Bruce Highway traces it’s length, meaning many beaches are not well managed where tourists stop along the way.

## COMMUNITY ERODED

Community sentiment has been eroded by multiple block owners who are 'scared' of the land and do not know how best to manage it. Noted the loss of the Isaac identity as a result of development.

## VISION FOR THE FUTURE

### WATER RESOURCES

Participants would like to see Mt Bridgett dam go ahead as it would be positive for recreation and to support communities during drought conditions – need water to be secure and reliable. Too much \$ invested in river systems when dams seen as favourable in this area.

### WELL MANAGED AND CONNECTED LANDSCAPES

Cane farmers seem to have to work harder than block owners who are not required to do anything worthwhile. Need corridors so wildlife can move through, and of an adequate size to allow for developments that are encroaching.

## HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

### EDUCATION

Target younger generation as adults are difficult to influence – "You can only educate people who want to learn". Suggested – incorporate NRM into school curriculum and better landcare presence.

### INVEST IN INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGIES

Example given was use of aquanovas rather than septic tanks, and that Australia is behind the game in terms of innovative practice.

### IMPROVED GOVERNANCE, BETTER STATE AND FEDERAL INITIATIVES

Community and Council are 'against NRM' and in favour of development so it is hard to make vision a reality.

Although developments avoid Regional Ecosystems of significance, this does not consider corridors and encroaching on productive agricultural land.

"We don't need development here, keep it in Mackay".

### BALANCE

Of development and environment – 'it can't all always be about money'. Suggested yin yang philosophy of 'the perfect balance'.



## VALUES

### WATER – QUALITY AND SUPPLY

Importance of platypus to Pioneer community noted. Water quality vital for reliable supply to agriculture as valley is majority cane.

### LIFESTYLE

Scenery, views, neighbours not too close

## CHALLENGES

### TRADITIONAL VERSUS CONTEMPORARY FARMING REPUTATION AND IDENTITY

Scare mongering around issues such as diron gives farmers a bad reputation and farmers are not great self promoters. Noted that council use chemicals with no negative reputation. Majority of land is farmed so farmers get bad reputation if anything goes wrong. Most contemporary farm practices are much improved from where this reputation originates in older farming practices. 'The public has old thoughts about farming, but times have changed. When you rely on that bit of dirt to make your money, your sons inheritance, why would I jeopardise that (with poor management practice)?'

### URBAN ENCROACHMENT INCL. SMALL BLOCKS

Suggested that small block may be key contributor to chemical and nutrient run off, but no time is being spent exploring this because scapegoats exist in form of farmers.

### CANE PRODUCTION

There is only a certain amount of chemical you can cut before you lose production values. Need to do more with less.

### UNRELIABLE WEATHER

Impact on agriculture of unpredictable weather and disruption of jobs i.e. chemical application. Legislate to rules but weather has no rules. It seems extreme but it was extreme in the 1800s too.

## CHANGES (POSITIVE)

### WATER QUALITY

Noted that cane and platypus survive so the water quality is not too bad.

### SPECIES CHANGES

More flying foxes, fewer cane toads. Disagreement on whether bird numbers have increased or decreased. Some rationale behind treating cane for grubs, so fewer birds result.

### GENERAL

'All these changes are not as dramatic as everyone assumes. We are very lucky to live here.'

## CHANGES (NEGATIVE)

### SPEED AND EXTENT OF GROWTH

Example given of time taken to get to Mackay now all small towns are developing and traffic lights and speed limits along the road slow journey considerably. Last 5 years housing developments are accelerating, and there are not adequate green spaces between houses. Infrastructure is increasing with

plans for sewage treatment in area.

## COMMUNITY DYNAMICS OVERTURNED

Over last 20 years region has gone from explicitly production and cane families, to disinterested and distracted communities who have different values. People do not see value in supporting small local business that don't turn a cent, whereas these are really culturally valuable centres. Community used to be linked to mill, school, shop and services and now, out of 30 people in one participants class he is the only one who remains.

Area dominated by people who can't afford to live in Mackay but have no vested interest in the local area.

## VISION FOR THE FUTURE

### BALANCE OF DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES

Desire to stop urban sprawl coming into the valley and to protect natural and productive areas. There needs to be a strategy to control this. Not just a 20 year plan but a much longer term vision for grandchildren. Need to ensure developments have adequate green space between. Council should not apply terms around Mackay developments to the Valley – it's unfair to apply these ideas. Plans should change as community dynamics change. One size does not fit all with regard to development. Understand economies of building high density urban areas but it is not in the best interests of the community and environment – does that not have a value too?

### REPUTABLE, PRODUCTIVE AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIES

Ensure cane is supported as it is good for tourism. Developments can occur on marginal cane land, it's just not as attractive to developers as it is not on main roads. Agriculture needs to promote itself more as general public still believe 'we are throwing chemicals at the reef'.

## HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

### COUNCIL ROLE

Numbers (people) dictate areas not hectares, Council is moving in right direction but still makes it difficult for cane farmers to stay on properties. Lure of using properties for superannuation and threat of mining taking workers.

### BUILD CAPACITY

People do care about natural resources but this is not capitalised on enough, there is a need to market NRM correctly and empower people to act. Community has changed, people are willing to take and not give. Need to bring back community spirit and responsibility, to reconnect people to landscapes.

## VALUES

### LIFESTYLE

Climate, peaceful, clean

### ENVIRONMENT

Rainforest, fresh air

### HERITAGE

Pioneering days, dairy, distinct nature of living at altitude and the benefits and challenges that brought the early settlers.

## CHALLENGES

### THREATS TO GBR

Although inland 'it is Australian to worry about it (the Reef)' due to port development, dredging, water quality and the use of scapegoats to mediate the actual issues i.e. blaming farmers and COTS when the real issues are inappropriate economically driven developments.

### LACK OF INDUSTRY

Eungella has a little bit of a few things; tourism, dairy, timber, but not a lot. This was attributed to decline in community...

### COMMUNITY

General lack of interest in participating toward any community activity. Dominated by a willing handful and a disengaged majority.

## CHANGES (POSITIVE)

### ENVIRONMENT

Deemed far enough from Mackay to avoid large scale development and much of the area is protected as national park. 'I would hate to see the rainforest destroyed'.

Noted how incredible the rainforest was following cyclone Ului as it 'sprang back' relatively quickly (resilience).

## CHANGES (NEGATIVE)

### COMMUNITY

In last 7 years community has declined in numbers and spirit. Following Ului the social dynamics changed as the hotel was destroyed and the local 'bar flies' came to the social area which stopped functioning as community did not want children there. It never recovered. Children used to play outside but now 'it is like a ghost town'.

### INDUSTRY

Demise of dairy industry has not helped community cohesiveness. Most farmers have left to work on mines. Cattle now beef production. Ului wiped out the cabinet makers of the area.

## VISION FOR THE FUTURE

### APPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT FOR THE REGION

Strongly consider where development occurs and what is being destroyed and sacrificed for what gains. Development on the beach in Mackay considered 'unforgivable'. Adelaide is a good model with in tact sand dunes and coast relatively in tact. Erosion will be next biggest issue.

Pioneer Valley perceived to be of concern as developments come west from Mackay and buildings occur so close together. Economy considered too important.

### MAINTAIN AREA

Leave rainforest in tact, also properties of Eungella deemed 'so beautiful'. The properties have a mix of production but maintain forests and creek lines well. Wildlife is abundant.

## HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

### COLLABORATIVE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

'People and organisations need to stop living in their own little economically driven world'. Change needs to occur by considering all angles and perspectives as voices are being dominated by economic focus. Short term gains, unsustainable.

### CAPACITY BUILDING

Importance of generational change and education.

## VALUES

### PROXIMITY TO NATURAL AREAS

Beaches (clean and healthy), connectivity between green places, Pioneer Valley and Finch Hatton Gorge nearby, natural things among the infrastructure important, public access to environment.

### LIFESTYLE

Recreation, reserves, beach all part of Mackay lifestyle. Value ability to live on the coast, but only if it's well planned.

### AGRICULTURE

Value productive soil and agricultural land.

### GOVERNANCE

Value good and honest governance.

## CHALLENGES

### COASTAL DEVELOPMENT, ACCESS AND POLLUTION

Concern in protection of foreshore from development as public lose amenity of foreshore as not everyone can afford to live there. Rubbish, run off and noxious weeds (coffee bush, prickly pear). Government not held accountable for past inappropriate development developments.

### PACE AND NATURE OF DEVELOPMENT

Boom bust town. Associated environment issues such as increased and more severe erosion in developed areas.

### COMMUNITY

Nature of community sentiment has responded to mining town culture. Mining driven shops and facades dominate the face and feel of the town. Care for environmental areas low.

## CHANGES (POSITIVE)

### PROACTIVITY IN BEACH MANAGEMENT

Mackay has become more proactive in some beach management as opposed to being reactive 5 years ago. For example Blacks Beach Spit used to allow vehicle access which has been stopped, much improving the area.

Other associated benefits - first beach stone curlew nesting on certain beach. Someone saw nesting turtle in the day on a beach.

### POSITIVE INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

Blue River Trail given as example of positive development that benefits whole of community.

## CHANGES (NEGATIVE)

### SEASONAL VARIABILITY

Don't have reliable seasons or croplands, maybe getting more variable.

"On a high tide, I wouldn't leave my things on my balcony. 5 years ago that was never a worry but now with every high tide with rain, it will be at my door".

## CHANGING FUNCTION OF LANDSCAPES

1960s on beach dune vegetation 30-40m can go and come back and return, when the natural process is removed it doesn't return.

Cementing drainage channels in the city in place of low level mangroves. Changes ambiance of suburbia and how run off acts during events.

## INCREASING POOR/INAPPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT AND URBAN ENCROACHMENT

Inappropriate development on foreshore and across low land which will flood. Focus too much on making \$\$\$. Urban encroachment into good agricultural land, should be zoned accordingly. Floodways now being built upon.

## COMMUNITY

Community are less concerned than they were as people are just hanging in keeping their job, negative about ability to change anything, hopelessness. Too busy working. Disconnect with landscapes. Children are interested but get into 20s and the attitude becomes 'let someone else do it'.

## VISION FOR THE FUTURE

### SELF SUFFICIENCY AND AGRICULTURAL SECURITISATION

The need to provide food for growing population and become self sufficient. Look after farmers, maintain balance.

"We can and need to feed our own population. All this beautifully rich soil being covered by houses is a crime".

Issue of sale of land as superannuation policy.

### NATURAL FUNCTIONING LANDSCAPES

Capture natural functioning landscapes, Mackay should not become like the Gold Coast. "The natural environment should be woven throughout urban landscape, not so separated, no interconnected concrete jungles where you need to drive elsewhere to see nature".

Coastal zone plays important role. Identify where ecosystem services are being provided and plan to keep those to maintain them.

### COMMUNITY CAPACITY

Remove apathy by reconnecting people to urban landscapes too, make sure people can see it every day. E.G. Functioning dune systems, mangroves.

## HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

### COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES AND CAPACITY

Community gardens where people invest in fresh produce, community building, more cost effective, reduce food miles. Sell Mackay as a resilient and sustainable community.

Adopt a bush/beach – mechanisms that go beyond old 'group' model. A lot of community members clean up their areas.

Look at renewable energy, become sustainable. More bike paths.

Educating from an early age to re-engage with community. Generational change. Expand good work of Reef Guardian schools.



Utilise older generation to educate and spread messages of environmental sustainability and resilience.  
Need strategy to better engage mining community.

## REGENERATE, RESTORE, REPAIR

Maintain esplanades and natural creeklines.

Natural functioning landscapes – increase or maintain current effort.

## COLLABORATE

Create shared visions across decision makers so community. Create effective framework to link NRM into other plans.

A plan people can buy into, people will own it and drive it. Influence

## VALUES

### PRODUCTIVE AGRICULTURAL LAND

Healthy soil, viable landscapes from which to make a living.

### GOOD QUALITY RELIABLE WATER RESOURCES

Reliable access to affordable water for agriculture. Proserpine Dam and the importance of this as a symbol of 'a region worth investing in'.

### HISTORY AND HERITAGE

Those who are fourth generation farmers value the lifestyle of the land and the generational stewardship that has been passed to them. Importance of responsibility to look after land in accordance with great-grandfathers wishes.

### OTHER INDUSTRIES

Example given of Airlie Beach, which is beneficial to have nearby when sugar industry is weak as it bolsters the economy and sustains Proserpine where other similar cane towns may become deserted.

## CHALLENGES

### VIABILITY OF AGRICULTURE

"Viability and sustainability sits on top of everything in this area". Main issues include:

- Losing young people to better paid professions (lack of contingency)
- No future in sugar (markets)
- Governance issues, including red tape and pressure on farmers to make property aesthetically pleasing and functional for greater good, with little return on this investment
- High risk for farmers to invest back into farms
- Inability to go 'extra mile' in property management with ageing farming population

### BALANCE AND DIVERSIFICATION

"Change is coming whether people like it or not. We have to be ready for it."

Greatest challenge is remaining viable and to do so farmers need to find a way to survive. Need diversification, different crops, different approaches, new opportunities. As region changes, need to still consider cane in balancing act of economic development.

Cattle and cane have been the backbone of this area since the 1800s, lots of people have tried lots of different things but have been restricted by inefficiencies (transport of cattle as example).

### ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Invasive species (pigs, sicklepod), and spread via floodwater and poor land management across other tenures, e.g. national parks. Erosion. Controlled traffic 'disaster'. Pressure on Goorganga Plains.

## CHANGES (POSITIVE)

### PROGRESS WITHIN INDUSTRIES

Positive outcomes have occurred as farmers incorporate new technologies that make land management more efficient and sustainable. Example given is the new pasture species that are adaptable to different soils, which is a good change when they work.

## SPECIES CHANGES

Increase in whistling ducks and magpie geese. Goorganga looks healthy when it is full of wildlife.

## CHANGES IN REGION THAT ARE SET TO OCCUR CAN BE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE

Viability for future – area will degrade if current trajectory continues so change is necessary. Resilience to market fluxes essential. International ownership of casinos, mills, Abbott Point, happening quickly and people need to understand how to get a foothold in emerging opportunities. Infrastructure is taking majority of funding and farmers are underrepresented.

## CHANGES (NEGATIVE)

### GOVERNANCE

“You have to let us manage our land, we know it best”.

Relating to changing veg management legislation over time and inability to manage suckers and as a result, difficult to access for weed control. Issue of wild dog baiting program as trying to coordinate a program over 120 landholders via the bewildering array of rules is not an attractive option. No incentive to do a good job if there are too many barriers to achieve an outcome.

Government has to say what is of value as a natural environment.

### SPECIES CHANGES

‘Prolific’ increase in crocodiles, pigs and wallabies

### ISSUES INTENSIFYING

More young people moving away, more division of land for sale of small blocks, more invasive species, more erosion, more and more insecurity in farm retention and ability to plan contingency.

## VISION FOR THE FUTURE

### DIVERSE INDUSTRIES AND FULLY UTILISED LANDSCAPES

All participants want to see industry support to become more diverse. It is ‘impossible’ for agriculture to compete with mining.

Mention of potential in future to make the most of environmental markets (carbon sequestration projects were example given).

Need to be more tourist friendly, and draw people from the coast and make attractions fully utilizable such as Proserpine dam, walking tracks, camping areas and better fishing opportunities.

### BECOME MORE RESILIENT

As part of becoming locally sustainable, and building resilience of community, need to make industries attractive to young people. Need contingency plan. Land use is at mercy at income that can be generated from it. Do not want to be in a situation where more ratepayers is the only means to achieve economic stability.

## HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

### INVEST WISELY (GOVERNMENT, FARMERS, ALL SECTORS), SEEK OPPORTUNITIES, INNOVATE

Need strategic investment and subsidies for agriculture to stay afloat. Government and farmers will not invest if there is no return on investment. Need to innovate. Q: How do we diversify without the support

of the government? How do we encourage and coordinate dollars from mining to diversify our industry?

## INCREASE CAPACITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

Request of better access to information; how is mimosa program going? What is the condition of the water in the Proserpine River?

Invest in agricultural colleges to incentivize young people to return to land.

There are more smaller farms and lifestyle farmers. Councils need to coordinate this instead of passing it on to farmers to pick up the tab when environmental issues emerge.

"They (the Council) give consent for development they should take responsibility for the consequences".

## BETTER LAND MANAGEMENT INCENTIVES

Continue to seek ways to improve farm efficiencies. Support farmers to manage invasive species in a better way. Understand the lack of incentives and issues of having an older less mobile farming population.

Example given of pristine rainforest at Strathdickie, should have sold it to Council to keep it in tact but sold it to neighbour 20-30 acres and within 12 months it was gone. Q: How do we preserve these pockets, diversify land, and make it accessible to public?

Abbott Point, lots of wetland. Dredge should be put on areas where saltwater intrusion can happen.

## EXPLORE ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

Ecosystem services. Reimbursed for looking after land. Compensate farmers for broader good being delivered for community. Should be provisions for landholder if public is putting demands on their land for services.

## GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

- Landholders believed that rainfall is increasing in the area. Majority agreed that weather goes in cycles so it's hard to say if things are changing.
- Participants in a position where they are thinking of options, which is reflected in high number of suggestions for potential solutions relative to other landscapes

## KEY VISIONS AND THEMES

- Fully utilised and actively managed landscapes
- Need to look outside of agriculture for support

## VALUES

### ENVIRONMENTAL

Natural beauty of area, views, foreshores, islands, ocean, seclusion of beaches north of Dingo and remaining wilderness areas, lifestyle area affords its residents, still quiet and underdeveloped, the 'perfect place to live', all contributes to tourism and recreation that sustains the area.

### PRODUCTIVE AGRICULTURAL LAND

Benefit of having multiple industries, and the mutual benefit of having good quality agricultural land that tourists enjoy looking at.

## CHALLENGES

### APPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT

Residents anxious of potential for Dingo Beach to become 'like Airlie Beach' when Abbott Point occurs and region receives influx of new residents. Development is already creeping along the coast from Dingo along to Montys and further North. They would like Council to limit development and only develop areas of low value.

### GOVERNANCE

Sustainable development, need better and stronger governance that does not bend to economic pressure. Need to protect things like coastline for greater good.

### VIABILITY OF FARMING UNDER ONGOING ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

Farmers expressed difficulty in remaining viable when invasive species (sicklepod), erosion, runoff etc all came back to landholders as their responsibility when many issues come from upstream or off property.

## CHANGES (POSITIVE)

### INCREASED OPPORTUNITIES FOR BETTER LAND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

A lot of work has been done to reduce runoff, this is a good and proven model so just need to keep funding and rolling it out.

## CHANGES (NEGATIVE)

Inappropriate development "You can't destroy the environment, the very thing that people come from all over the world to see"

Destruction of natural environment and ecosystems in Airlie beach a primary concern, with Muddy Bay given as example. Considered a double standard that in the context of development, 'even the environment has a price'.

Airlie considered an eyesore, that the seascape and seaward views are still beautiful but beaches and rainforest have suffered. There are better examples of development models such as Noosa.

"You can't stop it (development) but needs to be sustainable. Muddy Bay can't become the blueprint as to how things will be developed in future".

Need to manage public impost of undeveloped areas. Access and infrastructure to actually view it, but within reason.

## WEATHER EVENTS

Cyclones getting worse and beaches taking brunt of energy, displacing sand and creating huge erosion issues.

## VISION FOR THE FUTURE

### SUSTAINABLY DEVELOPED AND FUNCTIONAL LANDSCAPE

Manage growing population and associated developments in a manner that is sustainable and allows the landscape to maintain critical functions.

### A WELL CONNECTED AND WELL PLANNED COMMUNITY

Create a community where people understand the decisions that have been made and have a meaningful stake in their landscapes.

## HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

### CAPACITY BUILDING AND COMMUNICATION

Reconnecting with landscapes, help broader community that live in the area value environment. Create a more responsible, invested society.

Confusion over fire management on islands and removal of palm trees on coast – community does not understand logic behind such interventions. Lack of communication.

### ADAPT TO ADVERSE WEATHER EVENTS

She oaks, mangroves, coconut trees along coast are natural buffers that reduce erosion and need to be maintained. Native and not native shouldn't matter when it comes to stabilising creek lines and foreshores.

### SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Need to get planning ahead of development, development shouldn't push planning. Need longer time frames and visions (25 years), led by the community. Need stronger policies and restrictions, provide lifestyle opportunities with a range of different living, medium density in Airlie, and open blocks on steeper land. 5 storey block of apartments more ecologically friendly than acres, but less aesthetically pleasing.

Activities deemed in line with sustainability include a buffer between high tide and development, use trees for wind control.

### COLLABORATIVE PLANNING – TRANSPARENCY, CONSULTATION

Better communication between land management and council, and government in planning and better integration of Council policies with other plans. Involve community more in planning schemes and use less jargon which is misleading as not easy to understand. Need better consultation and transparency.

Development favours those who understand legislation, usually developers with money and the resources and staff to seek caveats and opportunities.

A need for user friendly planning.



## GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

- Bitumen went in 10 years ago and changed the social boundaries and people can work and live in different places.
- Natural environment. Provision of services, need to trade and understand what you're willing to give up. Airlie beach grew too quick so infrastructure drive.
- Is more condensed development in small areas better? Could not decide.
- Reconnection with communities. Council needs to be supported by community, motivate each other, put pressure on. Community needs more of a voice.
- Couple with choice of any tropical place in the world, bought block in tropical rainforest overlooking Muddy Bay, don't like development but happy to contribute to it. Wouldn't like to change places like Dingo Beach.