

Queensland's Protected Area Strategy 2020–2030

Protecting our world-class natural and cultural values



Queensland
Government

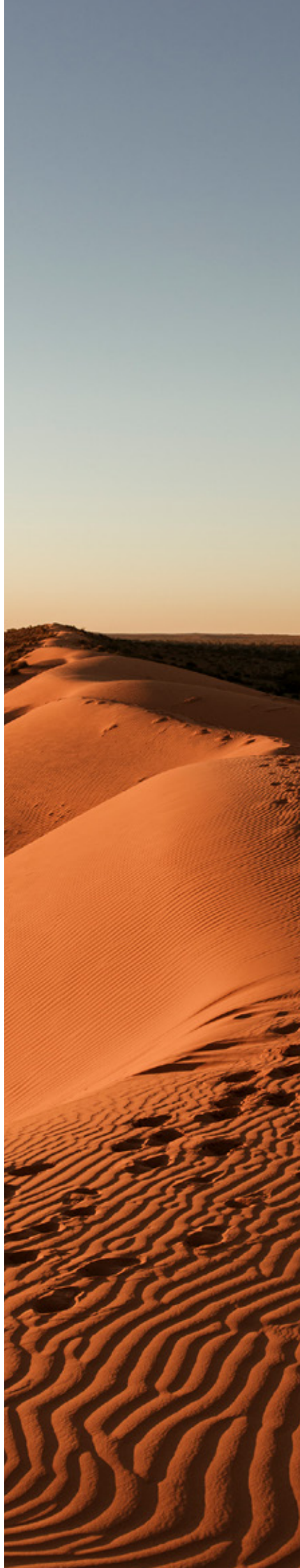


Image: Birdsville | © Tourism and Events Queensland

Prepared by: Department of Environment and Science

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#31956

Minister's foreword



Queensland is one of the most naturally and culturally diverse places on earth. It is home to incredibly unique and globally important ecosystems dating back to ancient times, with a rich history of the oldest continuous living cultures on the planet.

Queensland's deeply cultural landscapes and places provide stories and knowledge, entwined with native plants and animals that have been sustainably stewarded and nurtured for generations by Queensland's First Nations peoples.

These landscapes support our health, wellbeing and happiness, and enable us to enjoy an outdoor lifestyle that is envied by people around the world.

Protected areas—our national parks and private protected areas—are an important part of this connection to nature and culture. They contribute significantly in direct financial terms, and culturally, to Queensland's ongoing prosperity. Our national parks have been the cornerstone of a vibrant tourism industry.

For years, millions of visitors have flocked to Queensland's amazing and world-class national parks—from ancient rainforests in Far North Queensland, precious mammal fossil sites in our outback interior, through to lush islands along our dramatic coastline. These areas sustain jobs and provide economic opportunities for our regions.

The 2020 coronavirus health crisis is having a profound impact on both the Queensland economy in general and the tourism-based sector specifically. International and interstate visitors' ability to experience our national parks has been significantly reduced, with financial flow-on effects regionally and state wide. This highlights the strong role that nature-based tourism can play in rebuilding Queensland's economic strength as a destination of choice and generator of income.

To ensure we protect these precious places for future generations, Queensland's Protected Area Strategy aims to significantly build on our extensive existing network of protected areas, including our spectacular national parks, which are found in all corners of the state.

Queensland already leads the way in national parks fire management, and we intend to further extend this work to better protect our communities, wildlife and vegetation from uncontrolled bushfires.

Over the next ten years, we plan to transform this estate to become world leaders in the way we protect, conserve, present and harness Queensland's natural areas for their environmental, cultural and economic values. Investing strongly in innovative partnerships will open new doors for ecotourism opportunities and visitor experiences, and much more.

Central to this work is respecting and working in effective partnerships with First Nations peoples, whose knowledge and expertise is critical to delivering the best possible outcomes.

Through world-class national parks and other protected areas we will ensure Queensland's extraordinary nature and culture is actively supported to thrive, and protected for future generations to experience and enjoy.

Leanne Enoch

Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef | Minister for Science | Minister for the Arts

The purpose of this strategy is to inspire Queenslanders and visitors alike to feel excited and moved by the rich beauty and cultural heritage of our protected areas, and encourage partners and supporters to invest in our unique natural environment.



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A man wearing a wide-brimmed hat, a light-colored short-sleeved shirt, and dark cargo pants stands in a vast, open landscape of scrubland. The ground is covered with low-lying, dry-looking bushes and grasses. The sky is filled with dramatic, dark clouds, and the lighting suggests a sunset or sunrise, casting a warm, golden glow over the scene. The man is looking towards the camera with a slight smile.

Our ***vision***

Queensland's protected areas are world-class
for people, culture and nature

Introduction

Queensland’s biodiversity is truly extraordinary, and of significance at local, national and international levels.

Queensland is home to twice as many native wildlife species as any other Australian state or territory. Half of the species living in Queensland are unique to the state. Queensland is also home to 72% of Australia’s native bird species, 85% of its native mammals and just over 50% of the country’s native reptiles and frogs.

Queensland’s rich cultural values are also of global significance, with First Nations peoples—the world’s oldest continuous cultures—caring for land and sea Country as living cultural landscapes across thousands of generations.

National parks and other protected areas play a vital role in maintaining and protecting these amazing biodiversity and cultural values, for future generations, through their capacity to provide the highest levels of protection and long-term security available.

Queensland already boasts more than 1,000 national parks and other protected areas, five UNESCO World Heritage sites and five significant wetlands protected under the international Ramsar convention.

These areas conserve biodiversity and cultural values, and support functioning ecosystems that provide essential life services like clean air and water.

With the challenges of managing population growth, avoiding local and global biodiversity loss and mitigating and adapting to climate change, Queensland’s protected areas will play an increasingly important role in maintaining the overall wellbeing of our environment, our economy and ensuring Queensland has happy and healthy communities.

Queensland’s Protected Area Strategy 2020–2030 provides a pathway to grow our protected area system and transform the way protected areas are managed—providing real benefits to all Queenslanders including First Nations peoples, and putting Queensland at the forefront of conservation innovation across the globe.



Our *mission*

To enhance and maintain a system of world-class protected areas, guided by First Nations’ knowledge and expertise, global best practice and community needs, which ensures Queensland’s exceptional nature and culture are actively supported to thrive for future generations to experience and enjoy.

What will this *strategy deliver?*

- ✓ Growth of the protected area system to protect natural, cultural and heritage values
- ✓ More opportunities for the community to connect with nature and enjoy the associated health and wellbeing benefits this provides
- ✓ Increased support for First Nations peoples’ right to maintain their relationship with Country, conserve and protect it, and preserve and share cultural connection with the broader community
- ✓ Genuine partnerships with First Nations peoples that meets the aspirations of First Nations peoples
- ✓ Improved biodiversity outcomes, reduced habitat loss, improved protection and recovery of threatened species
- ✓ Increased resilience to climate change through carbon sequestration
- ✓ Increased resilience to climate change through a connected landscape that provides refugia for native wildlife
- ✓ Investment in innovative partnerships to grow, manage and promote protected areas
- ✓ Special Wildlife Reserves established on private land
- ✓ International best practice protected area management in partnership with First Nations peoples
- ✓ Jobs growth in the tourism and conservation sectors
- ✓ Enhanced fire management in partnership with First Nations peoples including use of traditional fire management practices
- ✓ Unique cultural tourism experiences, including those delivered by First Nations peoples on protected areas
- ✓ Expanded Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger program
- ✓ World-class ecotourism facilities that enhance the protection of natural, cultural and heritage values
- ✓ Support for the protection of natural and cultural values on private land
- ✓ National parks and other public protected areas are carbon neutral
- ✓ Young people and the whole community are engaged with protected areas, facilitating a life-long appreciation of these areas and the benefits they provide
- ✓ Optimised economic assets and a diversified economic base
- ✓ World-class visitor experiences that utilise the latest technology
- ✓ World-class ecotourism trails are a key attractor for tourism



What are *protected areas?*

Queensland’s protected area system includes a mix of State-owned and managed protected areas, Indigenous-owned national parks jointly managed by Traditional Owners and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, and privately owned and managed nature refuges including those owned and managed by Indigenous peoples.

The ‘protected areas’ in this strategy concern land-based (terrestrial) areas established under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, including national parks, jointly managed national parks, conservation parks, resources reserves, and private land declared as a nature refuge or special wildlife reserve. These areas may include wetlands and river systems, but the Great Barrier Reef and other marine protected areas are not the focus of this strategy.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) defines a protected area as: *a clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.*



Image: Laura Ranger at rock art site, Cape York | © Queensland Government

Fast facts

Queensland's protected areas
(as at 31 August 2020):



Queensland's **protected area network** covers more than **14.2 million hectares** (8.26%) of Queensland—more than twice the size of Tasmania



149 threatened species are only found in Queensland's protected areas



More than **2.5 million hectares** of protected areas are managed by, or in partnership with, **First Nations peoples**



Queensland is home to **5 World Heritage areas**



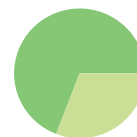
Terrestrial protected areas contain samples of **82% of Queensland's 'endangered' or 'of concern' regional ecosystems**



6% of Queensland's regional ecosystems are found only on **nature refuges**



Queensland's nature refuge network includes **534 nature refuges** and is the largest private protected area network in the country—more than **4.47m ha**



Queensland's **protected area network** is made up of:

- **69% public protected areas** (national parks, conservation parks and resources reserves)
- **31% private protected areas** (special wildlife reserves and nature refuges)

Why are *protected areas* important?

Image: Archer River, Mungkan Kandju National Park

Carbon sequestration

Protection and regeneration of tropical forests is particularly important for climate change mitigation and adaptation. Old growth forests with large woody species, like those found in the wet sclerophyll forests in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, are the largest terrestrial carbon stores and are believed to be active sinks.

Mangroves are capable of sequestering very large amounts of carbon, providing effective and very long-term carbon storage. Mangroves also prevent erosion and effectively reduce the power of waves, protecting coastal communities from damaging seas and storm surges. Nearly 50% (441,000 ha) of Australia's mangroves are found in Queensland, an estimated 14% (62,000 ha) of which are in a protected area.

While the conservation of nature is the primary purpose of Queensland's protected areas, their value extends well beyond this to include many other environmental, economic, cultural, social and health benefits.

Climate change

Protected areas play an important part in local and global responses to climate change, and have a role in mitigating climate change and adapting to its effects, including enhancing ecosystem resilience to climate change and providing refugia for native wildlife. As the effects of climate change increase, protected areas will become even more essential and at the core of how society, biodiversity and landscape processes change and adapt to new environmental conditions. Natural systems, of which protected areas are a part, collect vast amounts of carbon from the atmosphere, storing it in vegetation and soils, which prevents it from moving back into the atmosphere. In Australia and New Zealand, 10 billion tonnes (10 gigatonnes) or 12% of the total carbon stock, is believed to be stored in protected areas. Queensland's protected areas contain a number of high carbon-sequestration ecosystems, including tropical and mangrove forests.

Protected areas help to maintain ecosystem integrity and services, especially where those systems are under pressure. In places where populations or development pressures are particularly strong, protected areas play an especially crucial role in the supply of ecosystem services. Protected areas are a cost-effective way to mitigate the impacts of many types of natural disaster, including floods, storm surges, droughts and desertification.



Threatened species*

Queensland’s protected areas support many threatened species. Threatened species are those native species listed under the Queensland *Nature Conservation Act 1992* or Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* as being at risk of extinction. There are nearly 1,000 species currently recognised as threatened in Queensland.

Protected areas are critical to the conservation of threatened species. A recent scientific assessment report noted that conservation actions including protected areas have been successful in preventing the extinction of some species globally.¹ More than 72% of threatened species listed under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* are found in national parks and other public protected areas, with about 26% of Queensland’s threatened species either highly or entirely reliant on these areas for their survival. Significantly, 149 threatened species are found only in Queensland’s protected areas.

Protected areas that are particularly important for threatened species protection include Blackdown Tableland National Park, Glass House Mountains National Park, Lamington and Mount Barney national parks within the Gondwana World Heritage Area, and Wooroonooran, Daintree and Mt Lewis national parks within the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. It is particularly important to invest in proactive management of these areas as part of the broader government and community contribution to protecting threatened species across the landscape.

¹ IPBES. 2019. Summary for policy makers of the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

* Current as at 31 August 2020



Image: Black-clubbed Spider Orchid | Mike Mathieson, Queensland Herbarium

Black-clubbed Spider Orchid

Of the 85 threatened orchids in Queensland, 39 are currently believed to be entirely reliant on protected areas for their survival. The Black-clubbed Spider Orchid *Caladenia atroclavia* is one such species. Known only from Girraween National Park and the surrounding area, it is protected by the rock slabs and spectacular boulder piles of the natural landscape in the national park, and can be aided through the management of fire in the protected areas.

This spectacular ground orchid flowers in the spring.



Image: Brown Lake, Naree Budjong Djara National Park (Minjerribah/North Stradbroke Island)

Ecosystem services

‘Ecosystem’ is a term to describe the way plants, animals, microorganisms and the non-living environment interact together in a complex unit. There are many different types of ecosystems which provide different types of services.

Ecosystem services are those benefits people obtain from both the living and non-living natural environment. Types of ecosystem services include things like drinking water, clean air, pollination, flood control, the creation of new soils, and genetic resources.

Intact ecosystems, like those found in protected areas, offer a natural buffer to protect communities against disasters like storms and flood events that are being worsened by climate change, and provide the best possible opportunity for species and ecosystems to adapt as the climate changes.

Ecosystem services also provide economic benefits to the agriculture sector through, for example, nutrient cycling, soil retention, crop pollination and water provision.

Different people in our community value different ecosystem services, and many people may not realise which ecosystems are responsible for providing them. As clearing and landscape fragmentation increase, protected areas are increasingly relied upon to provide ecosystem services.

Mount Bauple National Park (scientific)—protecting genetic resources

This comparatively small national park protects the wild genetic stock from which the macadamia nut industry was developed. *Macadamia integrifolia* is a vulnerable species and in the wild grows in types of vine forest that are particularly threatened by land clearing and fragmentation. Mount Bauple is very important to the physical and genetic survival of this species in the wild.

M. integrifolia is the subject of extensive research to prevent its further decline and to protect its genetic integrity. Research organisations (CSIRO, Queensland Herbarium), educators (universities and colleges), conservation groups, industry groups and museums have carried out ecological and taxonomic research on the park.



Image: Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service rangers | © Luke Barrowcliffe, Goorie Vision

Connection to Country

The conservation values of Queensland’s protected areas are indivisible from their cultural significance for First Nations peoples, who have been stewarding the landscape for thousands of generations. Protected areas provide opportunities to recognise and respect First Nations’ rights and interests; and to work together with First Nations peoples, whose spiritual and physical connection to the land and specialised knowledge provide opportunities to collectively nurture and protect the environment.

‘Country’ is a term used to describe a culturally defined area of land associated with a particular, culturally distinct group of people or nation. The term Country is often used by First Nations peoples to describe family origins and associations with particular parts of Australia. First Nations peoples have diverse relationships with, connections to, and understandings of, the Australian environment. Some of these relationships are based on the traditional knowledge and practice passed down from generation to generation, while others have resulted from the various impacts of colonisation.

Protected areas present a unique opportunity to learn from and partner with First Nations peoples. They enable the integration of traditional knowledge with modern practices, such as traditional fire management practices. The Queensland Government is committed to protecting these special places together. By partnering with First Nations peoples, all Queenslanders benefit from a unique knowledge and perspective of Country, and the building of a shared future together.

Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger Program

The Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger Program works in partnership with remote and regional communities to support the employment of more than 100 rangers in 24 communities. Key to the program’s success is the adoption of a model of self-determination where communities identify their own priorities, employ their own rangers and help build Queensland’s capacity to adapt to a changing world.

By working in true partnership, we engage in two-way learning and benefit from unique and crucial support to respond to Queensland’s biggest strategic challenges and opportunities. By respecting and harnessing the leadership and knowledge of Queensland’s First Nations peoples, together we are delivering better environmental, cultural and economic benefits for all Queenslanders.



Image: Jelluragal Walkabout Tour, Burleigh Heads | © Queensland Government

Nature and health

The majority of Queenslanders now live in cities and our children are spending more of their leisure time indoors. New terms like ‘nature deficit disorder’ and the ‘extinction of experience’ are emerging as ways to describe how more people, particularly children and teenagers, are losing touch with their surrounding natural environment. An active connection with nature offers a way to address a range of health and wellbeing issues, and Queensland’s protected areas provide valuable opportunities to get outdoors and connect with nature.

Health and wellbeing

Protected areas provide community benefits as places for all people to appreciate and enjoy. They help build thriving communities in a number of ways. Protected areas offer chances for people to connect with nature and culture, and enjoy recreational activities. They also provide far-reaching economic, cultural, social, and health benefits. The flow-on effect of this is that a community that values nature, and culture and the environment, is more likely to want to protect it.

Protected areas are places where Queenslanders, visitors and tourists are able to undertake nature-based outdoor leisure and active recreation. Studies show that exposure to nature and nature-based activities, and connection with culture and culture-based activities, can have significant positive impacts on health and wellbeing, including psychological health. Opportunities to experience and connect with nature and culture are becoming increasingly important as populations and urban density increase. For all Queenslanders, protected areas are becoming an increasingly important way of accessing nature and culture.

The inter-relationship between human health and wellbeing and environmental health, and the associated benefits, are becoming better understood. The Queensland Government encourages outdoor active recreation in parks and forests as a part of the ‘Keep Queenslanders healthy’ Advancing Queensland Government priority and *Activate! Queensland 2019–2029*. It is a growing area of focused research and the Queensland Government is currently investigating the socio-economic value of protected areas such as national parks.

The psychological or mental health benefits of nature for individuals and society should not be underestimated. Studies have shown that nature can foster psychological wellbeing, reduce anxiety and stress, improve self-esteem, enhance productivity, reduce crime, promote healing and mental health, and reduce symptoms of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in children.

Economy

Globally, protected areas are recognised as important contributors to local and regional economies. While the primary objective of protected areas such as national parks is conserving nature, other recognised objectives include contributing to local economies through tourism.² In Queensland, protected areas provide a focal point for the tourism industry with many local economies relying on business generated by their visitors. A recent study by The University of Queensland showed that in 2018, national park generated spending³ in this state contributed at least \$297 million to the economy (Gross State Product), which in turn supported at least 2,725 total jobs (based on spending that would not have occurred in Queensland if the opportunity to visit national parks had not been available—considered a lower bound measure). For those visitors who stated that national parks were ‘very important’ to their travel and spending in Queensland, these figures increase to \$1.98 billion for Gross State Product and 17,241 total jobs respectively (considered the upper bound measure). This study also estimated the dollar value of the net benefits to park visitors (consumer surplus) which adds another \$659 million per annum, of which \$238 million accrues to Queenslanders.

In addition, the Queensland Tourism Industry Council reports that more than 324,000 international visitors took part in an Indigenous tourism activity, and more than 120,000 domestic overnight trips to Queensland included a First Nations tourism experience.

Protected areas and the economy

Research by The University of Queensland showed that in 2018, expenditure generated by visitors to Queensland’s national parks was estimated between \$419 million and \$2.64 billion, which in turn supported between 1,933 and 11,877 direct jobs and up to 17,241 total jobs for Queensland. The Benefit-Cost Ratio or return on investment (in terms of park visitor management costs) is high—estimated at between 3.9 (using the most conservative approach) and 10.5 (using the consumer surplus benefits to all visitors).

The economic benefit contributed by national parks and other public protected areas (parks) tends not to be immediately recognised in dollar value terms. This is unlike many other tourist attractions. However, parks and park use generates employment across multiple sectors—including people working on parks as rangers and contractors; First Nations ranger groups; joint management of parks with First Nations peoples; and jobs associated with tourism, building and construction, education, leisure, fitness, outdoor recreation, wellbeing, conservation, biodiscovery, research and other associated industries. As well as generating employment for First Nations peoples, investing in protected areas supports opportunities for self-determination, including in economic development.

In more remote areas, the visitors that protected areas attract play a significant role in supporting local businesses and regional economies. More than 90% of Queensland’s public protected area estate* is located outside of South East Queensland, providing employment opportunities and delivering significant economic benefits for regional Queensland.

² For example, other objectives of IUCN Category II National Parks include ‘to contribute to local economies through tourism’.

³ ‘National park generated spending’ is defined as expenditure by visitors who stated that national parks were ‘very important’ to their travel and spending decisions. The ‘unambiguous component’ (lower bound) of national park generated spending is that which is unambiguously due to the attraction of national parks, defined as spending that would not have been made in Queensland if the opportunity to visit national parks was not available.

* Current as at 31 August 2020

Why do we need a *Protected Area Strategy?*

This Strategy outlines a 10-year pathway to build on Queensland’s already extensive network of protected areas, positioning the state to meet future challenges, capitalise on opportunities, and respond to the community’s evolving needs and expectations. This Strategy is guided by global, national and state drivers and responds to a range of challenges and opportunities, including climate change, biodiversity loss, population growth, evolving conservation markets, demand for ecotourism, and emerging science to achieve improved outcomes.

The Queensland Government is committed to strengthening the way we partner with First Nations peoples to deliver real change and real outcomes through a genuine partnership approach. Rethinking our approach to protected area management, including building on existing joint-management approaches and developing new co-stewardship models, is an important part in reframing this relationship. Acknowledgment of the rights and interests of First Nations peoples, including traditional ownership and connection to Country, is a key focus of this Strategy.

The benefits that protected areas provide are much broader than the conservation of nature. They hold the stories of First Nations people, and connect us all to the oldest continuing cultures on earth. Additionally, as Queensland’s population grows and towns and cities become more urbanised, opportunities for outdoor recreation and connection with nature become increasingly important. Demand for sustainable ecotourism experiences is growing and, when managed well, ecotourism has the potential to promote connection to nature and culture, and educate the community about the importance of biodiversity and protected areas, while providing employment and boosting regional economies.

In 2015, the Queensland Government adopted a long-term target of increasing protected areas to 17% of the state’s land mass. That goal remains, as we embark on a new strategy to guide the management and conservation of our protected areas. The recent global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services⁴ reiterated that the need to halt global biodiversity decline is more urgent than ever with human actions threatening more species with extinction than ever before. This Strategy recognises the essential role that protected areas play in protecting Queensland’s biodiversity and ecosystem services by building resilience to adapt and thrive in a changing climate.

This Strategy provides the overarching framework and future strategic direction for Queensland’s protected areas. Short- and medium-term actions allow us to build a sustainable foundation that supports future growth and effective, evidence-based management of the whole system in ways that enhance the full suite of environmental, cultural, economic, social and health values that protected areas provide for all Queenslanders.

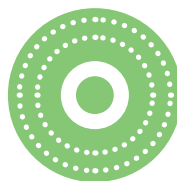
4 IPBES. 2019. Summary for policymakers of the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

Opportunities/trends



Conserve biodiversity

- Species are going extinct at an alarming rate—potentially hundreds of times faster than they would naturally—and the rate is accelerating.
- This Strategy complements other Queensland Government strategies and programs including the Conserving Nature—A Biodiversity Conservation Framework for Queensland, Threatened Species Program, SEQ Koala Conservation Strategy and Queensland’s Environmental Offsets Framework to address this by supporting the protection and conservation of biodiversity on protected areas, and providing and managing significant habitat for threatened species.



Value culture

- Strengthening the way we partner with First Nations peoples in protected area management will remove barriers and support First Nations peoples to achieve their rights to self-determination while meeting cultural and spiritual needs.
- The Strategy complements the Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger program and the department’s internal cultural capability initiative, the Gurra Gurra Integrated First Nations Framework, by prioritising partnerships with First Nations peoples and providing opportunities for new ways of working together on Country.



Respond to climate change

- Protected areas play a major role in reducing climate changing carbon dioxide emissions in the atmosphere. Fifteen percent of the world’s terrestrial carbon stock—312 gigatonnes—is stored in protected areas around the world.
- Protected areas also serve as natural buffers against climate impacts and other disasters, providing space for floodwaters to disperse, stabilising soil against landslides and blocking storm surges.
- They also provide refuge for species in a changing climate.
- This Strategy complements the Queensland Government’s climate change response, including the Queensland Climate Transition Strategy and the Queensland Climate Adaptation Strategy, by accelerating the expansion of protected areas.



Capture evolving markets

- There was a near all-time global high for voluntary carbon markets in 2019—companies and other organisations purchased offsets representing emission reductions equivalent to 98.4 MtCO₂e, or more than the annual emissions of the entire country of Qatar. Total market value hit \$295.7 million. This represents a 53% increase in volume and a 49% increase in value in the last two years.⁵
- Market highs were fuelled by interest in nature-based climate solutions. Transacted volume for offsets generated through tree-planting, forest protection and other projects from sustainable forestry and land use jumped 264% between 2016 and 2018. Volume for other offset types (such as renewable energy and energy efficiency) by comparison grew just 21%.⁶
- This Strategy complements programs such as the Land Restoration Fund and Queensland’s Environmental Offsets Framework by providing scope for these markets to intersect with established protected areas and protected area management. A stronger relationship between protected areas and these emerging markets will maximise conservation and biodiversity outcomes across the state.

⁵ <https://www.forest-trends.org/topics/biodiversity/>

⁶ <https://www.forest-trends.org/topics/biodiversity/>



Promote nature and cultural tourism

- The nature-based tourism industry is currently experiencing positive and sustainable growth in some regions—increasing 4% per annum since 2010. 2015 saw significant growth in the number of international visitors to state and national parks (13% growth from 2014).⁷
- This Strategy complements the Advancing Tourism Strategy and the Queensland Ecotourism Plan by supporting the growth of nature and cultural tourism and providing opportunities for greater community connection.



Utilise emerging science and technology

- Scientific advances, new technologies and big data are creating opportunities to leverage Queensland’s environmental credentials and drive improvements in the way we care for nature and manage protected areas.
- This Strategy complements the Engaging Queenslanders in Science Strategy and the Queensland Citizen Science Strategy by providing opportunities for Queenslanders to work with government to inform research, improve our understanding and drive efficiencies.

‘Riversleigh is one of the great wonders of the palaeontological world. What other site has produced such an extraordinary assemblage of mammals, birds, reptiles and many other creatures hitherto completely new to science? Not just one or two species but literally hundreds of them.’

— Sir David Attenborough, 6 June, 2019. Letter to mark the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the fossil deposits of Riversleigh being inscribed on the World Heritage List.



Image: Riversleigh fossils | Mark Nemeth © Queensland Government

Linked strategies/plans/programs



Global

- United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity
 - International Union for the Conservation of Nature World Commission on Protected Areas
 - United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
-



National

- Australia’s Strategy for Nature
 - National Reserve System
 - Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan
-



State

- Advancing Queensland’s Priorities
- *Queensland Human Rights Act 2019*
- Queensland Climate Transition Strategy
- Queensland Climate Adaptation Strategy
- Queensland Biodiversity and Ecosystems Climate Adaptation Plan
- Tracks to Treaty
- Queensland Biosecurity Strategy
- Queensland Walking Strategy
- Land Restoration Fund
- Queensland Ecotourism Plan
- Activate! Queensland
- Queensland State Disaster Management Plan
- SEQ Koala Conservation Strategy
- Environmental Offsets Framework
- Advancing Tourism Strategy
- Engaging Queenslanders in Science Strategy
- Queensland Citizen Science Strategy
- Conserving Nature—A Biodiversity Conservation Framework for Queensland
- Gurra Gurra Integrated First Nations Framework
- Threatened species program
- Master Plan for Queensland’s parks and forests



Strategic *directions*

Image: Lawn Hill Gorge, Boodjamulla National Park | © Tourism and Events Queensland

This Strategy provides a pathway to progress towards a world-class protected area system which plays an important and central role in safeguarding Queensland’s biodiversity and bio-cultural landscape. The Strategy lays the foundation required for Queensland to develop and maintain a protected area system that is ecologically representative, well-connected and integrated into the wider landscape, and effectively and equitably managed to sustain ecological resilience. It incorporates the important role of First Nations peoples, community engagement and visitor experiences in achieving this vision.

This Strategy sets the strategic direction for protected areas in Queensland over the next 10 years through six key objectives, and three strategic priorities—Grow, Care and Connect—which are underpinned by six guiding principles.

Vision

Queensland’s protected areas are world-class for people, culture and nature

Guiding principles




1. An ecologically resilient protected area system is fundamental to conserving Queensland’s biodiversity, providing ecosystem services, supporting community wellbeing and supporting the Queensland economy.
2. The rights, responsibilities, knowledge and aspirations of First Nations peoples are respected through active co-stewardship and support for growing and managing protected areas.
3. Protected areas are managed in accordance with contemporary best practice standards consistent with those set by the IUCN.
4. The selection of new protected areas will be based on scientific evidence and principles, and First Nations’ knowledges and systems, to optimise public value and long-term conservation outcomes.
5. Quality visitor experiences and community engagement with protected areas deliver important social, health, economic, cultural, and environmental outcomes for Queensland.
6. Private protected areas are valued for their unique contribution to the protected area system.

Objectives

Queensland’s Protected Area Strategy 2020–2030 will:

- improve conservation of **biodiversity**, including increased protection for **threatened species**, on protected areas through improved management and growth of the protected area system
- create **regional jobs** through enabling growth and opportunities for the tourism and conservation sectors
- increase resilience of protected areas to **climate change** through a connected landscape that provides refugia for native wildlife
- support **Connection to Country** through genuine partnerships with First Nations peoples that removes barriers and supports First Nations peoples leadership in protecting and caring for Country
- secure **innovative funding streams** to promote, effectively manage and sustainably grow the protected area system
- deliver **social, health, economic and cultural benefits** to Queenslanders.



Strategic Priorities	 <p data-bbox="379 539 488 584">Grow</p>	 <p data-bbox="804 539 900 584">Care</p>	 <p data-bbox="1184 539 1358 584">Connect</p>
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sustainably grow national parks 2. Strategically incentivise private protected areas 3. Build partnerships to grow the protected area system 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Enable First Nations peoples co-stewardship of protected areas 5. Enhance decision-making on protected areas 6. Deliver effective management of national parks 7. Facilitate effective private protected area management 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Increase community engagement with national parks 9. Ensure world-class visitor experiences build stronger community appreciation of national parks 10. Improve the community’s appreciation of and contribution to the social, economic and cultural value and benefits of protected areas.
Progress measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of investment partnerships to grow the protected area system • Proportion of Queensland’s land area secured in protected areas • Extent of lands managed as private protected areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of partnerships and collaborations to care for protected areas • Number of public protected areas being managed under the Values Based Management Framework • Extent of private protected areas participating in NatureAssist incentives and programs for effective conservation management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased social media engagement about protected areas • Upgraded visitor infrastructure and information at key visitor sites on public protected areas • Increased number of protected areas with published values based management instruments.

Note: The term ‘national park’ in the above table is used to include national parks, conservation parks and resource reserves that make up public protected areas.

Strategic Priorities— *Grow*



Outcome

An expanded Queensland protected area system that safeguards biodiversity and cultural values, protects threatened species, and builds climate change resilience while creating economic benefits

The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity recognises that the earth’s biological diversity is a global asset of immeasurable value to present and future generations. For example, biological resources are vital to humanity’s health and economic, cultural and social development. The Convention also recognises that well governed and effectively managed protected areas are a proven method for safeguarding species’ habitats and populations, and for delivering important ecosystem services.

Since 2015, the Queensland Government has increased the size of the protected area estate by over 1.2 million hectares—up from 7.56% to 8.26% of the state. In 2019–20 alone, nearly 20,000 hectares has already been dedicated as protected area.*

Since February 2015, 11 properties totalling 65,673 hectares have been acquired or donated to the public (national park managed) protected area estate. These include additions to Bunya Mountains National Park, Conondale National Park, Lockyer National Park, Great Sandy National Park, Mount Dumaresq Conservation Park, and the establishment of Earl Hill Conservation Park.*

In terms of private protected area expansion, 57 new nature refuges have been declared since February 2015, and the amount of land protected as a private protected area has increased by 479,190 hectares.*

Special wildlife reserves

Queensland is the first state in Australia to create special wildlife reserves, a new class of protected area that provides national park level protection for private land of exceptional natural and cultural value. Special wildlife reserves, established by a voluntary agreement between the Queensland Government and landholders, help ensure that more habitat is protected for our wildlife, including threatened species.

Special wildlife reserves complement the nature refuge class of private protected area, which allows for sustainable land uses to occur alongside environmental land conservation. However, incompatible land uses like mining and forestry are not permitted in special wildlife reserves. Management of these private protected areas will be in accordance with strict statutory management principles and an approved management regime. Special wildlife reserves enable landholders to attract investment from Australian and international conservation organisations to support their conservation efforts.

Protected areas are widely recognised as providing the most secure and highest level of protection for the conservation of biodiversity and, in Australia, play a significant role in reducing the risk of declines in threatened species. Research by CEDA⁸ indicates that Queenslanders place a higher importance on the protection of national parks compared to the Australian population as a whole. The Queensland Government seeks to recognise this community expectation by growing the protected area system.

⁸ CEDA (2018) Community pulse 2018: the economic disconnect – Queensland. ISBN 0 85801 320 7

* Current as at 31 August 2020

We are aiming to create a comprehensive, adequate and representative (CAR) protected area system that protects samples of the biodiversity of all biogeographical regions of the state. This approach aims to maximise biodiversity conservation and, through effective management, enhance ecosystem resilience to climate change and other threats. Additionally, we will consider, in partnership, cultural landscapes and values.

The Queensland Government is committed to accelerating the growth of the protected area network towards international targets. However, growing the protected area system requires a significant investment. Raising the level of funding required is a considerable challenge that requires multiple pathways and new, innovative approaches. Increasing government funding over time will be coupled with developing innovative investment models and partnerships to leverage new opportunities as they emerge, such as green bonds, and expanding markets in carbon and biodiversity.

The Queensland Government will prioritise our investment in the protected area system to ensure the most important values are protected for future generations. We will continue to enhance and refine the necessary frameworks and analytical capacity to guide protected area expansion as new information becomes available. A changing climate and other human-induced changes present new considerations for protected area decision-making frameworks. The Queensland Government will prioritise investment that maximises biodiversity outcomes, addresses habitat loss, protects and recovers threatened species, protects cultural and historic values, integrates climate change adaptation and provides for greater landscape connectivity.

We will also work with private landholders, including nature conservancies, to increase the private protected area system through nature refuges and special wildlife reserves. The ongoing growth of the conservation sector provides a range of opportunities to partner with motivated and innovative stakeholders to identify and realise co-investment opportunities and drive conservation and broader community outcomes.

Mount Windsor Nature Refuge

Queensland's largest nature refuge covers an area of 493,811 hectares in the Diamantina River catchment. It contains approximately 100 kilometres of the Mayne River and a complex mix of ecosystems including braided channels, ephemeral wetlands and permanent waterholes, extensive grassy plains, herblands and plains, and pavements of ironstone. Scattered across the landscape are plateaus and mesas with cap rocks of sandstone, claystone and siltstone formed during the Cretaceous Period (66-145 million years ago). It contains large areas of intact and unaltered natural landscapes and protects populations of threatened species.

Mount Windsor Nature Refuge adjoins both Diamantina and Goneaway national parks, resulting in a combined area of over 1 million hectares of protected area.

Mount Windsor Nature Refuge is owned by McDonald Holdings, one of the largest pastoral companies in Queensland. McDonald Holdings has three nature refuges (located in the Channel Country, north west highlands and Cape York) that have a combined total area of approximately 902,000 hectares.

Image: Eungella National Park, Mackay | © Tourism and Events Queensland



Actions

1 SUSTAINABLY GROW NATIONAL PARKS *	
1.1	Grow the national park acquisition program focusing on representativeness, biodiversity conservation, cultural values, connectivity and climate change resilience
1.2	Develop and implement a National Park Investment Prioritisation Framework to apply best available science, cultural and management factors in prioritising national park acquisitions
1.3	Accelerate conversion of up to 20,000 hectares of forestry land to protected area and undertake further assessment of additional forestry land for potential conversion as hardwood forestry harvesting is ceased
1.4	Accelerate the transition of high value unallocated State land (USL) and other State land tenures into national parks or other protected areas
1.5	Review current arrangements for compensation payable for revocation of a part or whole of a protected area to allow strategic land acquisitions, where appropriate, to contribute to expanding national parks
2 STRATEGICALLY INCENTIVISE PRIVATE PROTECTED AREAS	
2.1	Use investment incentives including matching funds and other contribution and partnership opportunities to encourage increased delivery of private protected areas
2.2	Address potential financial impediments to establishing private protected areas
2.3	Expand the Nature Refuge Program and establish special wildlife reserves
3 BUILD PARTNERSHIPS TO GROW THE PROTECTED AREA SYSTEM	
3.1	Attract international and national partnerships, investment and philanthropic connections aimed at growing and enhancing Queensland's protected areas
3.2	Deliver closer cross-government coordination on selection and expansion of protected areas to reach both state-wide and local conservation objectives

Note: The term 'national park' in the above table is used to include national parks, conservation parks and resource reserves that make up public protected areas.

Strategic Priorities— *Care*



Outcome

Protected areas will be managed in partnership with First Nations peoples, landholders and other land managers to deliver global best practice in conserving natural and cultural values

Protected areas have a diverse range of environmental and cultural values, recreational, community and commercial uses, infrastructure, and threats. Balancing and providing for these needs is at the core of effective management. Effective management of protected areas is just as vital to achieving conservation outcomes that protect natural and cultural values as growing the overall system.

This is becoming more important with the increasing impacts of extreme weather events and changing environmental conditions under climate change. Effective management is essential for fire management and addressing invasive pests—a key threat to biodiversity in Queensland.

Our fire management program includes:

- planned burning to reduce fuel loads, protect park and forest facilities and neighbouring properties, and conserve natural systems and processes
- maintenance of an extensive network of roads and firelines
- well-trained and equipped staff to respond to wildfire outbreaks
- a cooperative approach to fire management across the landscape with the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, other land management agencies and the community.

In 2019–20, the Queensland Government allocated \$3.5 million, as part of a total \$16 million over four years commencing in 2019–20, and \$2.6 million per annum ongoing, to enhance Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service's fire management capacity and capability to effectively manage wildfire risk for increased community safety and conservation outcomes.

A values-based approach to management

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service Values-Based Management Framework introduces an adaptive management model for Queensland's protected areas. The Framework, founded on international best practice, targets management towards the most important values on our parks, and enables flexible and proactive management and improvement of effectiveness over time.

We actively manage pest plants and animals to protect the biodiversity and natural processes in these areas through the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Services Pest Management System. Our pest control programs are undertaken in cooperation with neighbouring landholders, other state agencies and local government in accordance with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service's Good Neighbour Policy.

Being a good neighbour is an integral part of managing protected areas. As a land manager, the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service has legislative responsibilities and custodial obligations to protect life and property, be a good neighbour, provide access and work cooperatively with partners across the landscape. This involves ensuring that communities and neighbours are safe from the impacts of fire and pest plants and animals, that we contribute to safe access and fencing between properties, and are a part of broader community programs such as fire hazard reduction and landscape scale pest control.

Integration of protected areas into a well-managed landscape requires communication, cooperation and ongoing involvement with local communities and neighbours. Good relationships are the key to maximising positive outcomes.

The Care priority provides the mechanisms necessary to manage, and support management of, Queensland's protected areas in partnership with First Nations peoples, landholders and other land managers.

Protected areas will be managed to sustain their natural and cultural values, address threats, and build environmental resilience to ensure healthy species and ecosystems for future generations. This will include integrating climate change adaptation into protected area management planning, and using science to strengthen outcomes for Queensland's biodiversity and threatened species. We will focus on delivering outcomes that achieve our vision by embedding a framework for monitoring the effectiveness and impacts of protected areas across the entire protected area system to better evaluate our efforts and inform decision-making.

2019 Bushfires

From 1 September 2019 to 31 January 2020, there were over 8,000 fire incidents across Queensland, affecting over 7.7 million hectares of the state and the habitats of 648 of our threatened species. Leading up to these unprecedented events, Queensland recorded the hottest and driest years on record. Despite this, the QPWS achieved planned burns of over 1.03 million hectares against an annual target of 634,800 hectares, set following the Victorian Royal Commission recommendations of 5% of the estate annually. Our outstanding fire management program resulted in less than 2% of these fire incidents starting on our parks and forests estate. Of the 133 fires that started on the estate, we succeeded in containing and securing 76% of these within the boundaries of our estate.

For First Nations peoples, managing the health of Country is integral to cultural wellbeing and livelihoods. Protected area management is fundamental in caring for Country. We acknowledge First Nations peoples as the traditional custodians of these lands, and appreciate and honour the knowledge and skills Indigenous peoples bring to the protection and presentation of Queensland's protected areas.

The recent IPBES global assessment of biodiversity and ecosystem services⁹ found that globally, biodiversity is generally declining less rapidly on Indigenous peoples' land than in other areas. That is why the Queensland Government recognises the knowledge, innovations and practices, institutions and values of First Nations peoples; and is facilitating this input into protected area decision-making, planning, governance and management. This is fundamental to achieving a world-class protected area system that protects both natural and cultural values. Closer partnerships with First Nations peoples—built through understanding, respect and a greater awareness of traditional ecological knowledge—will deliver improved protected area management.

The Queensland Government will develop and adopt new partnership models with First Nations peoples as part of the values-based approach to care for protected areas. This approach will facilitate ecological adaptation and resilience to climate change, and allow each area to be managed according to its unique natural and cultural values, as well as meet legislative and custodial obligations.

The Protected Area Strategy also provides a unique opportunity to complement the success of the Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger Program through place-based partnership opportunities that will support the co-stewardship of Queensland's environmental and cultural landscapes. Queensland's Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers care for land and sea Country, conserving important First Nations cultural heritage and ecosystems across the state. The Program creates jobs and training opportunities, two-way knowledge transfer, and facilitates partnerships with First Nations communities to support on-ground work and engagement.

Since 2015, the Queensland Government has increased funding in the Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger Program to over \$12 million per annum, increasing the number of funded rangers from 65 to over 100 across 24 regional and remote communities.*

⁹ IPBES. 2019. Summary for policymakers of the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

* Current as at 31 August 2020

Enhanced engagement with, and support for, private landholders will guide their management of private protected areas. Next-generation incentives, new and strengthened partnerships, and new models for engagement will support landholders to establish and manage nature refuges and special wildlife reserves. The expanded NatureAssist toolkit will include increased opportunities to work with First Nations peoples on private protected areas and extended support for landholders who are Traditional Owners. Cultural Heritage Assessments will be included in the process for establishing Special Wildlife Reserves, and these assessments will be undertaken in partnership with the relevant Traditional Owners.

The roll-out of a monitoring and evaluation program will measure conservation outcomes on private protected areas.

Working with partners such as First Nations peoples, not-for-profit organisations, conservancies and philanthropists will strengthen the conservation economy and drive growth in the jobs of the future, providing more opportunities for Queenslanders to pursue careers in conservation, and environmental management and protection.

Joint management in Queensland

Queensland has entered into joint management arrangements in the Cape York Peninsula region and on Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island). Joint management arrangements are established in an Indigenous Management Agreement and park management statement or plan, and in accordance with the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*. These arrangements allow for existing and proposed national parks and other prescribed protected areas (in the case of Minjerribah) to become Aboriginal land and also be dedicated and managed as a national park or other class of prescribed protected area.

The areas are jointly managed by Traditional Owners (represented by a native title corporation) and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service. In 2008, Lama Lama National Park (Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal land) became Queensland's first jointly managed protected area. This recognised the importance of the Country to the Traditional Owners, while being driven by biodiversity conservation, based on the natural and cultural values, which are inseparable.

‘Thank you for a fantastic and important experience. Keep up the great work.’

‘... an excellent outdoor activity.’

— Feedback from the 2020 Summer holiday program at David Fleay Wildlife Park and Walkabout Creek Discovery Centre.



Image: Walkabout Creek Discovery Centre | © Queensland Government

Actions

4	ENABLE FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES' CO-STEWARDSHIP OF PROTECTED AREAS
4.1	Develop and implement a transformative co-stewardship framework with First Nations peoples for national parks and other public protected areas
4.2	Co-design and co-deliver ecotourism through collaborative models of partnership with First Nations peoples to offer unique cultural tourism experiences
4.3	Promote First Nations business and employment opportunities in the conservation economy through protected areas
4.4	Strengthen support for First Nations peoples as landholders and recognise traditional land management practices and protection of cultural values on private protected areas
4.5	Further expand the formal role of First Nations people in the management of protected areas by training and qualifying Traditional Owners as authorised officers under the <i>Nature Conservation Act 1992</i>
4.6	Further expand the Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger Program

Hidden deep in Queensland's savanna country, Boodjamulla National Park lies on ancient sandstone of the Constance Range. Lawn Hill Gorge carves a ribbon of green water and fringing rainforest through the surrounding expansive plains.



Image: Lawn Hill, Boodjamulla National Park | Carly Smith © Queensland Government

5 ENHANCE DECISION-MAKING ON PROTECTED AREAS	
5.1	Embed the Values-Based Management Framework, a values-based approach to priority setting in national parks and promote in other protected areas management
5.2	Incorporate the best available science and technology into management planning to enable responsive climate change adaptation including achieving carbon neutrality in national parks
5.3	Promote the protection, recognition and valuing of Indigenous traditional and ecological knowledge in protected area planning and management, including fire management practices
5.4	Establish a central data hub and a data-driven approach to inform management planning and activities
5.5	Build a monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement (MERI) framework to track the condition and trend of key natural, cultural, historic and social values
5.6	Ensure ecotourism facilities provide monitoring and reporting to contribute to park management and planning
5.7	Engage with researchers and citizen science programs across the protected area system to target key knowledge gaps and improve management approaches
6 DELIVER EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF NATIONAL PARKS *	
6.1	Prioritise protection and recovery of threatened species in national parks
6.2	Showcase our world-class protected area system via ‘IUCN green listing’ and other opportunities
6.3	Ensure fees and other user revenue support national park and Recreation Areas management
6.4	Continue to phase out grazing on national parks as grazing leases expire

Note: The term ‘national park’ in the above table is used to include national parks, conservation parks and resource reserves that make up public protected areas.

7 FACILITATE EFFECTIVE PRIVATE PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT	
7.1	Expand the NatureAssist toolkit to better support management of private protected areas, including supporting partnerships between First Nations peoples and private landholders
7.2	Grow jobs in the conservation economy by expanding existing, and establishing new, partnerships with the not-for-profit sector and other potential third-party alliances
7.3	Commission research into a stewardship funding model to enable improved management, monitoring and evaluation to facilitate better conservation and cultural outcomes on private protected areas
7.4	Enable private protected area landholders to contribute to scientific knowledge and understanding including through targeted citizen science programs

Image: Mount Beerwah, Berrburum State Forrest | © Tourism and Events Queensland



Strategic Priorities— *Connect*



Outcome

Queenslanders are aware of and appreciate the state’s protected area system, and support investment in the expansion and management of protected areas to conserve natural and cultural values

Protected areas provide many community benefits, including biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services, as well as social, health, economic and cultural benefits. The existence and ongoing protection of protected areas relies on people appreciating their value. This becomes increasingly important as the population and urban density increases and children and adults spend more time indoors and connected to technology. Studies have shown that people are losing touch with nature and this is having a negative effect on health and wellbeing and the stewardship of nature.

A priority of this Strategy is to Connect people with Queensland’s protected areas, facilitating a life-long appreciation of these areas and the benefits they provide. This connection supports direct health and wellbeing benefits for individuals as well as longer-term benefits for the environment. Environmental stewardship of Queensland’s protected areas is the responsibility of, and provides opportunities for, the whole community—including First Nations peoples, private landholders, government, nature conservancies, industry and the wider community.

Queensland’s protected areas provide opportunities for people to connect with cultural and historic values, including the culture and history of First Nations peoples, and historic and World Heritage values. Partnering with First Nations peoples in protected area decision-making and management through co-stewardship arrangements provides opportunities for First Nations peoples and culture to be recognised, celebrated and honoured. Enabling First Nations peoples to maintain their strong links with Country, recognising First Nations’ rights,

Life’s Best Moments

The Life’s Best Moments campaign encourages Queenslanders to ‘Think Outside’ and experience Queensland national parks. Achieving the balance between healthy parks and active lifestyles through participation in recreational activities and sustainable ecotourism ventures plays an important role in building strong, healthy and prosperous communities.

interests and traditional custodianship, is critical to the health, wellbeing and livelihoods of communities, and to conserving bio-cultural diversity.

Protected areas provide the opportunity for First Nations peoples to preserve and share their stories and culture with the broader community, facilitating a greater understanding and appreciation of the diversity and richness of First Nations’ culture and connection to Country. First Nations peoples have an important stewardship role in conserving Queensland’s protected areas through existing formal joint management arrangements and a range of other partnerships with community-based Indigenous ranger groups. A key focus of the Strategy is to strengthen this stewardship role with new approaches to achieve genuine partnerships.

The Queensland Government, through the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, also plays a central role in this stewardship on behalf of the community. As the managers of almost 10 million hectares of public protected area, the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service has a responsibility to ensure the community is aware of and enabled to participate in its management decisions and activities, where appropriate, and can

Gurra Gurra Integrated First Nations Engagement Framework

The Department of Environment and Science has co-designed the Gurra Gurra Integrated First Nations Engagement Framework to help reframe our relationships with First Nations peoples. Gurra Gurra is a Kooma word meaning ‘all things’ and references the importance of the connectedness of the world in which we live, work and walk. The Gurra Gurra Framework will cover nearly all areas of our business and guide our approach to delivering meaningful and positive impacts with First Nations communities.

easily and conveniently find the information they need about Queensland’s public protected areas.

Other landholders play a vital role in biodiversity conservation by choosing to establish a private protected area on their property—a nature refuge, or a special wildlife reserve (a new class of protected area that can provide a higher level of protection for private land with exceptional natural or cultural values). Building the community’s connection with nature and protected areas, and understanding of the benefits they provide, will help encourage landholder interest and participation in these opportunities for private land conservation.

An important part of connecting Queenslanders to protected areas is promoting opportunities for visitors to appreciate nature and facilitating a greater understanding of its benefits. A strong focus will be placed on educating children and young people. Educational opportunities and programs are an integral part of the Strategy. The opportunities include face-to-face education on-park, in schools or online, and focus on connecting people to nature, encouraging environmental literacy, and inspiring future generations to act as responsible environmental stewards. The programs include citizen science and other opportunities for people to connect with their local biodiversity, as well as programs that strengthen the capability and capacity of local and state-wide conservation groups.

Active recreation—such as walking, camping and bike riding in protected areas—provides opportunities for individuals, families and groups to get outdoors and connect with nature and culture, while also providing obvious health benefits. Encouraging and supporting active outdoor recreation is a key commitment of the ‘Keep Queenslanders healthy’ Advancing Queensland priority.

Healthy and well-managed protected areas are the foundation of Queensland’s ecotourism industry, which provides significant economic benefits for local and regional communities including substantial employment opportunities. Experiencing nature and First Nations cultures is a primary motivator for both domestic and international visitors in Australia. Queensland has a natural competitive advantage in providing visitors with high-quality cultural and ecotourism experiences because of our world-class national parks and two distinct Indigenous groups—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Ecotourism, including that delivered in partnership with First Nations peoples, can also have positive impacts on visitors who leave with a deeper love and respect for our unique cultural landscapes. Ecotourism can also serve to maintain and strengthen First Nations’ culture and identity, while providing for self-determined opportunities for economic development.

The Queensland Government supports best practice ecotourism on protected areas in line with the IUCN Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines. This means supporting operators that demonstrate best practice in terms of presentation, protection and partnership arrangements, as well as public benefit.

Ecotourism proposals undergo a rigorous assessment process to ensure eco-tourism within protected areas is undertaken with minimal impact and managed sustainably. The Ecotourism Facilities on National Parks—Implementation Framework sets out seven Guiding Principles and provides a transparent model for assessing and approving proposals for ecotourism facilities on national parks. It incorporates strong conservation and public interest values which reflect the Queensland Government’s commitment to low-impact, best-practice ecotourism facilities in national parks, including:

- ensuring alternative off-national park sites have been considered first
- a preference for proposals located on previously disturbed sites or which involve the re-use of existing redundant infrastructure
- a contribution back to the national park estate
- ensuring exclusive use areas associated with ecotourism facilities are restricted to only those areas that are necessary to operational requirements
- effective engagement and partnership with First Nations peoples, with shared benefits.

The Framework is supported by the Best Practice Ecotourism Development Guidelines, which assist ecotourism applicants to develop ecotourism facilities and experiences on national parks that are in the public interest, are ecologically sustainable and ensure, to the greatest possible extent, the preservation of the land’s natural condition and protection of its cultural values and resources.

The Connect priority identifies actions to engage and inform people about the environmental and economic value of protected areas, and how protected areas can enhance community health and wellbeing by supporting a wide range of natural and cultural experiences, active recreational activities and visitor opportunities. The Connect priority is fundamental to the Care and Grow priorities.

MyRanger—A park ranger in the palm of your hand

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service’s innovative new MyRanger App has been designed to allow visitors to experience and engage with rarely seen species in Springbrook National Park. The app uses augmented reality to enrich visitors’ on-park engagement, experiences and understanding of cultural, historical and ecological values. The app also includes ranger-guided tours, interactive park map and flora and fauna library.

Ecotourism—IUCN Best Practice

The IUCN advocates ecotourism best practices that include:

- tourism policies that contribute to the conservation of nature as well as generate economic benefits to both protected area authorities and local communities
- supporting community-based delivery of tourism services that is market related
- building training in business development and management skills into community-based delivery of tourism services
- re-imagining recreational activities in protected areas as a way to meet community needs and address larger societal goals
- mutual benefit sharing with Indigenous peoples.



Image: Ranger at Girraween | Robert Ashdown © Queensland Government

Over millions of years, 117 square kilometres of natural rock formations have been carved out of the granite landscape, exposed and eroded by the elements. Girraween National Park is a wonder of nature, with rock sculptures, granite outcrops and rockpools.

Actions

8 INCREASE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WITH NATIONAL PARKS*	
8.1	Use digital story telling channels, interpretive signage and First Nations-owned-designed-and-led tourism experiences on Country to share the cultural significance of individual areas
8.2	Publish protected areas management information, including results of reviews of the condition of park values and management effectiveness
8.3	Deliver education programs and embed education in protected area planning and activities to foster future stewardship for and appreciation of protected areas
8.4	Facilitate greater community participation in promotion of protected areas and their broader social, health and economic values
8.5	Market the extensive range of recreational opportunities available in national parks
8.6	Create new nature-based tourism opportunities, including active recreation, in protected areas
9 ENSURE WORLD-CLASS VISITOR EXPERIENCES BUILD STRONGER COMMUNITY APPRECIATION OF NATIONAL PARKS	
9.1	Invest in visitor facilities and enhance park visitor experiences and engagement through smart apps and other technology and better matching of visitor market types with national park information
9.2	Review the Queensland Ecotourism Plan 2016–2020 to ensure new ecotourism facilities provide educational, recreational and park management outcomes, and other public benefit
9.3	Deliver the Ecotourism Trails program to provide new opportunities to deliver internationally competitive, low-impact cultural and ecotourism experiences

Note: The term ‘national park’ in the above table is used to include national parks, conservation parks and resource reserves that make up public protected areas.

10	IMPROVE THE COMMUNITY'S APPRECIATION OF AND CONTRIBUTION TO THE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL VALUE AND BENEFITS OF PROTECTED AREAS
10.1	Support opportunities to expand broader community understanding of First Nations peoples' culture in connection with protected areas
10.2	Demonstrate the economic value and social benefits of national parks and other protected areas in addition to conservation outcomes by better understanding and promoting their contribution to the Queensland economy, regional areas and healthy lifestyles
10.3	Bring public, private and philanthropic sponsors together through a foundation or other investment vehicle to enable funding partnerships for protected areas
10.4	Build local and regional 'Friends of Parks' and other supporter networks to enable direct involvement in valuing protected areas

Image: Cycling at Daisy Hill Conservation Park | © Queensland Government



Community consultation

The Queensland Government released a draft Queensland Protected Area Strategy in January 2017 to give the public and stakeholders the chance to provide feedback on proposed actions and offer new ideas. More than 280 submissions were received with significant feedback provided on the survey questions, as well as on other aspects of the draft Strategy. These submissions have informed and help shape the actions required for future growth and management of Queensland’s protected areas.

What Queenslanders have already said about our national parks and protected areas

“

It is vital that the State maintains its role in providing strategic direction and coordination to enhance the management of protected areas in Queensland.

”

An investigation into visitor’s passes, fees and new technologies is warranted.

“

Queensland Government should continue to support and fund the current private protected areas like Nature Refuges, especially their ongoing management.

”

“

We welcome this strategy as an opportunity to promote a more comprehensive analysis of the costs and benefits of protected areas and to expand on the role they can play in local livelihoods, whilst meeting conservation goals.

”

Given the considerable tracts of conservation land owned/managed by Local Government Authorities (LGAs) that currently operate outside the Protected Area estate, this is potentially a commendable exercise.

“

Fees charged should exclusively go into the management of existing areas or the acquisition of new national parks.

”

“

Landowner support should be provided, in terms of both financial support as well as provision of on-ground management advice. Many landowners would do the “right thing” if only they had assistance in knowing what the “right thing” is.

”

A strong focus on young people is important to generate future support for protected areas and increase interest in and knowledge of nature. So, programs that combine volunteerism (and more than weeding) and enticing nature-focused activities would be worth exploring.

The ongoing commitment to establish a comprehensive, adequate and representative network of protected areas that is properly managed is welcomed and remains a scientifically robust objective.

A large disincentive for landholders under the existing land conservation options is that their land is still subject to mining and other decoupled rights, such as logging and grazing. The Special Wildlife Reserve could be an intelligent solution to this problem.

A critical opportunity to educate young people (and old) on the value of Australia’s unique fauna and flora is being lost. Interpretive opportunities nourish emotional bonds with nature. Overseas visitors expect such services to contribute to their experience as tourists and to the socio-economic health of local (often remote) communities.

If LGAs are given the capacity to more directly deliver nature refuges, these must be managed scientifically and dedicated in perpetuity before receiving State incentives.

Any proposed mixing of activities, particularly commercial activities, in those areas need to be balanced heavily in favour of preserving the area’s natural condition and protecting the area’s cultural resources and values.

A greatly expanded National Parks system is essential both to save Queensland’s declining wildlife, and to build the state’s multi-billion dollar nature tourism industry.

The benefits that Queenslanders draw from national parks greatly outweigh the amount of government investment required for parks growth and maintenance.

We support programs that create capacity through supporting Indigenous Australians to manage their land.

An analysis of the socioeconomic benefits of the parks estate should be high priority, as it demonstrates the value of public investment in conservation efforts.

How will we achieve *our vision?*

Achieving the vision of the Strategy will require taking up the opportunities to successfully capitalise on a range of key enablers, including the knowledge of First Nations peoples, new investment models and partnerships and the ability to rapidly adopt and apply advances in science and technology.

As the original custodians of the land, First Nations peoples are essential partners in the care of the protected area estate. Partnerships with First Nations peoples, through formal agreements such as co-stewardship agreements, and in working together on a day-to-day basis on Country, either on park or on a private protected area, will be essential. To enhance our relationships with First Nations peoples, the cultural capability and competency of the department will be strengthened through the Gurra Gurra Integrated First Nations Framework which aims to reframe our relationships with First Nations peoples.

New investment models and partners will be critical to expanding the protected area system and for caring for the unique biodiversity protected by both public and private protected areas. Green bonds, public private partnerships and other investment models provide opportunities to capitalise on increasing levels of corporate interest in environmental protection, climate change and sustainability. By building on existing relationships, the department is well-placed to make the most of opportunities to work with business and industry, as well as the conservation and philanthropic sector.

Queensland's scientific expertise, both within Queensland Government itself and among our various partners in the university and conservation sectors will be a critical building block for our success. Applying this expertise and coupling it with new technology, data analytics and internet-enabled devices will provide us with information that will change the way we grow and manage the protected area estate to deliver the very best outcomes for Queensland.

Implementation

Queensland's Protected Area Strategy 2020–2030 is a framework to help us manage and grow our protected area system. It brings together our partners, stakeholders and the community to create lifelong stewards and protectors of our unique, world-class natural endowments.

- The priorities will ensure we do not lose sight of what we are trying to achieve.
- The principles-based approach guides our decision-making, meaning we can respond to emerging issues as they arise.
- The actions set out what we are doing in the short, medium and long term to achieve our vision.
- The monitoring and reporting will help keep us on track.

The Strategy will be implemented using a staged approach, ensuring that actions delivered in the short to medium term lay the foundation for those delivered over the longer term and into the future. It will build on initiatives already underway that directly contribute to sustainable growth and effective management, introduce new initiatives, and refocus and adjust actions and initiatives as necessary over time, as circumstances change and new opportunities arise.

Evaluation of outcomes

Implementation of *Queensland's Protected Area Strategy 2020–2030* will be evaluated on a regular, systematic basis in line with the progress measures identified on page 19. Evaluations will also be undertaken on individual actions and programs to identify whether the desired outcomes for protected areas are being achieved. Evaluation will be undertaken in accordance with the Queensland Government Program Evaluation Guidelines and as detailed in an evaluation plan.

Reporting on progress

Progress will be reported regularly and published online. The report card will detail what has been achieved during the year, and measure progress being made towards meeting the Strategy's objectives and delivering its strategic priorities.



Glossary

Aboriginal land	refers to a type of inalienable freehold title established under the <i>Aboriginal Land Act 1991</i> , and is often referred to as ALA freehold.
Biodiscovery	is the process of analysing native biological material to identify useful bioactive compounds or other molecular, biochemical or genetic information for the purpose of commercialisation. In Queensland this is dealt with under the <i>Biodiscovery Act 2004</i> .
Bioregion/biogeographic region	areas with the same broad landscape patterns including geology, climate, flora and fauna. They are the primary level of biodiversity classification in Queensland. ¹
CAR	comprehensive, adequate and representative. A protected area system that protects comprehensive, adequate and representative samples of regional ecosystems across the state maximises the protection of biodiversity.
CEDA	Committee for Economic Development of Australia.
Country	is a term used to refer to an area of land over which Australian First Nations people have a traditional cultural and often custodial relationship.
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation.
First Nations peoples	a term that has a similar meaning to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; however, it has a deeper meaning as it recognises various groups as distinct and separate nations.
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature.
IUCN green list	the IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas is a global standard of best practice for area-based conservation. It is a program of certification for protected and conserved areas that are effectively managed and fairly governed.
NatureAssist	the State of Queensland's incentives and support program for private protected areas.
NatureAssist toolkit	a suite of financial and non-financial incentives, tools and services available to support landholders in the effective management of private protected areas.
National park	the predominant form of publicly-owned protected areas. Where indicated, the term is also used to include national parks, conservation parks and resource reserves that make up public protected areas.
Ramsar convention	refers to the international <i>Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat</i> that was signed in Ramsar, Iran in 1971.

¹ Sattler, P.S. and Williams, R.D. (eds). 1999. The conservation status of Queensland's bioregional ecosystems. Environmental Protection Agency, Queensland Government, Brisbane; *Vegetation Management Act 1999*.

Regional ecosystem	regional ecosystems are vegetation communities that are consistently associated with a particular combination of geology, landform and soil within a particular bioregion. ² Regional ecosystems are a useful surrogate for biodiversity and are the basis for establishing a CAR protected area system.
Terrestrial protected area	means all protected areas under the <i>Nature Conservation Act 1992</i> . A terrestrial protected area may include land that is, or is at any time, covered by waters (e.g. wetlands, tidal areas).
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.
Values Based Management Framework	the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service’s management framework, providing a transparent and adaptive approach for meeting its park planning and management accountabilities.
World Heritage Area	an area or site that has been chosen by UNESCO as having cultural significance.

² Sattler, P.S. and Williams, R.D. (eds) 1999. The conservation status of Queensland’s bioregional ecosystems. Environmental Protection Agency, Queensland Government, Brisbane; *Vegetation Management Act 1999*.



