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# Comments on the Draft Terms of Reference for the Far North Queensland 2025 Regional Plan

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Presented to:  
Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation;  
and  
Minister for Local Government, Hon. Andrew Fraser

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## **Introduction**

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The Cairns and Far North Environment Centre (CAFNEC) is the peak community organisation for environmental protection and sustainability in Far North Queensland. CAFNEC believes that the development of a statutory plan for Far North Queensland provides the potential for innovative and visionary urban planning, and implementation and monitoring that will enhance quality of life and the protection of the environment for current and future generations.

Long term sustainable planning for urban and rural development in the region is urgently required to address a number of critical environmental, sustainability and viability issues. Given the growing population pressures, the significance of this area's social, cultural and environmental assets, and the threats of unplanned and unsustainable urban development, we believe that statutory regional planning presents a positive opportunity to balance issues of urban growth with environmental conservation.

CAFNEC supports a regional approach to planning which better reflects natural catchments and bioregions. Further, whilst many local governments do comply with the intentions of *IPA*, institutional non-compliance occurs more often than is acceptable. This results in poor planning and development which leaves an enduring legacy of negative environmental and social impacts. The other outcome of such non-compliance is the community's loss of faith in the planning process and commitment of all levels of government to achieving the goal of ecologically sustainable development.

CAFNEC also recognises the *FNQ2025 Regional Plan* has limitations and constraints in relation to delivering sustainable outcomes. We urge the State to identify these limitations and constraints, and develop legislative and policy responses to ensure they do not cripple or impede, but rather encourage and facilitate the intention of the State and the community to achieve the goal of ecologically sustainable development

We look forward to direct participation in the development of the regional plan by responding to the planning process, providing ideas and options for change and by facilitating community consultation and engagement. This submission specifically addresses the Draft Terms of Reference for the *FNQ 20025 Regional Plan* and also describes CAFNEC's vision for a sustainable future for Far North Queensland.

## **Vision for a sustainable future in Far North Queensland**

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A world class environment deserves a world class plan. The unique and valuable environment in Far North Queensland as well as the special values and culture of our community combine to present an unprecedented opportunity for a truly innovative and visionary plan for the future.

The world is changing rapidly with environmental and sustainability issues now recognised for their critical importance to all other aspects of human activity. What is now required is an approach that puts sustainability at the centre of planning and development. Regional planning in Far North Queensland should be more than just a plan – it should be a program for achieving sustainability and a strategy for change that anticipates and adapts to the broader environmental and social challenges. Sustainability and viability must underpin and drive any long term planning process.

Whilst these concepts are paid lip service in most government policies and plans, what are lacking are mechanisms to ensure planning and development operates within the natural and social limits of the region. Without a healthy, clean, and sustainable environment, quality of life, cultural and social assets and long term economic productivity are severely diminished.

A sustainable regional planning process should drive development decisions and be integrated with all the elements that contribute to a healthy and prosperous community. *FNQ 2025* has the potential to act as a beacon for change and demonstrate world's best practice for sustainable development. Whilst we recognise that the government may be reluctant to try anything "brave", given the broad concern in the community over climate change and sustainability issues, and the willingness of the community to support measures to tackle these issues (Voter Opinions on Climate Change and Nature Protection – Galaxy Poll, Jan 2007), we believe being "brave" with this plan will be of great political benefit for the government. Further, Far North Queensland, being a regional area, offers the perfect opportunity to trial a much smarter approach to planning than that currently being implemented.

Our hope is that the region is recognised internationally as an example of how to respond appropriately to both local and global issues. To ensure a sustainable future for Far North Queensland a number of key elements/priority areas must be addressed. These are outlined below.

## **Key Sustainability Issues**

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### **Sustainability as a primary objective**

First and foremost, the fundamental rationale behind developing a regional plan should be to achieve ecological sustainability. This is recognised as the core objective of both the *Integrated Planning Act (1997)* and the *FNQ 2010 Regional Plan*. CAFNEC recognizes that the concept of sustainability applies across social and economic dimensions as well, and that these aspects are fundamentally interconnected. Sustainability must be the core objective of the Plan. All mechanisms and models encompassed within it should be designed to further this objective.

In order to achieve sustainability, it is not enough to simply state it as a core objective. Mechanisms must be included in the process to ensure sustainability is an outcome rather than just an aspiration. The [International Institute For Environment And Development](#), Environmental Planning Group (1993, p.2) said, "The need for sustainability analysis and particularly for indicators of sustainability is a key requirement to implement and monitor the development of sustainable development plans, as required by Agenda 21 agreed at UNCED in June 1992." It is essential that this Plan include appropriate and rigorous indicators of sustainability, environmental health and community well being, Further, thresholds for each of these indicators need to be established, and a mechanism developed to ensure this information feeds back into and directs the planning and development process in a dynamic and adaptive manner. CAFNEC will be putting significant effort into this component of the process.

A major flaw of the South East Queensland (SEQ) Regional Statutory Plan was that sustainability appeared to be an after-thought, and secondary to projected urban and population growth considerations. CAFNEC would like to see *FNQ 2025* place sustainability outcomes as the starting point for regional planning. The emphasis is very

different from the SEQ scenario, and CAFNEC believes that a shift in focus to placing sustainability as the core objective, will produce a much more useful and sophisticated policy instrument for guiding future growth, and retain the Plan's relevance into the next generation, and ensure future prosperity.

### **Reducing the region's net energy consumption**

*FNQ 2025* provides an ideal opportunity to facilitate reductions in the region's net energy consumption. Smart planning has the capacity to significantly reduce the regional greenhouse gas contribution, and given the very significant threats to FNQ from climate change impacts, for the State not to embrace the opportunity set emissions reductions as a desirable outcome would be both a lost opportunity and irresponsible. Planning for a responsible energy future should include cutting net carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas contributions, and increasing opportunities for carbon sequestration through landscape restoration. The Plan could assist this objective through:

- Restricting future residential development to compact, consolidated urban forms, which are easily serviced by public transport nodes.
- Improving transport planning to promote more energy efficient transport options
- Requiring more energy efficient design for commercial and residential buildings
- Protecting remnant and re-growth native vegetation
- Encouraging better waste management
- Establishment of indicators and triggers associated with a regional carbon footprint.

Good planning connects residents to jobs and facilities by the most direct route. In the context of peak oil and climate change, the assumption of long commutes in private cars, underpinning the direction of expanding urban growth has lost its credibility.

Agricultural land and food producing regions should be protected from encroaching residential development, as regions should always retain the capacity to feed their resident population. In the future event of major oil shortages, the region's prosperity may depend on its ability to deliver local produce to large population centres living adjacent to agricultural land. Therefore, where possible every urban and regional centre should be surrounded by a significant buffer of productive land. Promoting local produce stimulates local and regional economies, reduces the direct and indirect costs of importation, lowers carbon emissions, enhances bio-security management and improves the resilience of our communities.

Transporting energy from Central Queensland through a vast network of cables is inefficient both in terms of energy lost and economic costs. A significant percentage of the energy generated is lost in transit and maintaining (or replacing/ up-grading) such infrastructure is expensive. The Regional Plan should identify and invest in opportunities to increase the use of renewable energy technology at both a state level and locally in the development of micro-generation facilities for providing energy to local populations.

### **Resilience to Climate Change**

As evidenced by the report “*Climate Change in the Cairns and Great Barrier Reef Region*” (AGO 2004) the city of Cairns is particularly vulnerable to changing sea levels and other global warming impacts. These impacts are likely to increase in significance within the life of the Plan and beyond. Detailed studies of future scenarios for this region are currently being undertaken by scientists at James Cook University and CSIRO. Findings from these studies must be factored into future projections for urban planning and environmental management in the region; otherwise the Plan will soon become redundant. Government will be held responsible by community for a lack of foresight in the face of potential future natural disasters arising from climate change impacts.

### **Planning Viable Communities and Containing Urban sprawl**

The combined effects of climate change and higher oil prices will have major implications for the way in which we organise our communities and local economies. Land use planning needs to acknowledge this when planning for future urban and residential growth. Towns and centres should be organised along more traditional lines, where large population centres which have mixed internal economies which employ a significant portion of residents within a small distance of their homes, and which are serviced by agricultural land in close proximity. Communities which are arranged in this way have a much better chance of retaining their viability in the coming decades, where we may not be able to depend on cheap imports for our basic needs, and where an increase in the frequency of severe weather events must be taken into account.

The model of urban sprawl currently rolling out across the Australian landscape is energy intensive, destructive to community well being and ecologically unsustainable. New models of urban development are urgently required if we are to protect agricultural and conservation landscapes and reduce our energy demands. Such models exist and need to be properly considered within the context of the planning process. Without proper reform in urban design, this planning exercise is destined to fail in terms of achieving its core objectives.

### **Investing in Public Transport**

Towns and residential centres throughout the region should be connected by efficient and flexible transport options which promote efficiency and community, such as bike lanes, buses, coaches and rail. Energy efficient alternatives should be expressly factored into the urban and rural residential planning framework. New residential development and consolidation should only occur in areas where there is potential to upgrade or construct public transport corridors to link them to the rest of the region.

Industrial areas should be strategically located near rail corridors so in future they may be serviced by rail freight networks. Major public facilities such as airports and seaports must be located near to existing or projected rail infrastructure, with the capacity to connect these ports to population centres through other means than just road.

Routes for public transport and freight rail corridors between major centres within the region should be identified and reserved through a system caveat. The *FNQ 2025 Regional Plan* should recognise and cater for the renewed interest and investment into rail. All alternatives to major road linkages must be considered and integrated into the Plan.

For this planning process to have credibility, it needs to include the proposed upgrade of the Kuranda Range Road. To excise the regions biggest infrastructure project with far reaching implications for other elements of the planning process for political reasons makes a mockery of the process and the States commitment to it.

### **Habitat Protection and Biodiversity Conservation**

Natural ecosystems, ecosystem processes, wildlife and their habitat are already suffering very great impacts under urban and rural development pressure. The natural environment now faces threats from many angles, and it is imperative that these stresses are reduced to build ecosystem resilience in the face of major threats such as climate change. Future population growth and residential expansion must proceed in a way which does not compromise the health of ecosystem function and wildlife communities. Attempts to stabilize the decline of certain plant and animal species and to rehabilitate natural areas must be increased and supported; not undermined by poor planning and escalating development pressure.

Extensive wildlife habitat mapping, much of which has already been undertaken by government agencies and other bodies, must be utilised to create a matrix of wild country throughout the region, with natural areas large enough to support significant biodiversity and genetically viable communities of plants and animals. CAFNEC advocates for the protection of critical habitat as one effective approach to preserving biodiversity and preventing the decline of critically endangered species. High resolution mapping has been completed for Cassowaries and vegetation communities within the Wet Tropics Biome. The plan must ensure that critical habitat is fully protected in a regional landscape context.

The design and location of conservation areas should be sensitive to connectivity, include wildlife corridors, and represent a wide variety of ecosystem types (wetlands, wet tropical rainforest etc.) New urban areas should be separated from these conservation zones where possible by buffer zones, so that wildlife communities are not exposed to the threats of weed invasion, human activity and predation from domestic animals.

It is critical that a strong distinction between open space for recreation purposes and open space for conservation must be reinforced through this Plan. It is important that open space be set aside for recreational activities so that protected areas are not forced to absorb these activities.

### **Protecting and rehabilitating our Waterways**

By protecting our waterways, we can significantly preserve ecosystem function and services, and create thriving hubs of biodiversity which criss-cross the entire region. Riparian zones are hot spots for biodiversity and habitat, and should be recognised as such, and protected by any planning instruments. Protecting the riparian zone from development provides a number of significant benefits to the region, through reducing erosion and run off, improved water quality, providing habitat, supporting fisheries and reducing impacts upon estuarine and marine environments. CAFNEC believes that all waterways should be spared from development right up to their banks, and that significant buffer on either side of the flood mark be reserved for conservation.

We commend the work that is being currently undertaken to rehabilitate the river banks of our major rivers, such as the Barron and the Johnstone, and these efforts must not be

undermined by any future development. Furthermore, the protection of smaller waterways and creeks should be included in the Plan.

### **Protecting our Coastal zone and floodplains**

Our coastal areas are particularly threatened by development pressures, and already the region has lost most of its wetlands to development. Coastal development and water supply infrastructure on rivers has also exacerbated coastal erosion issues and the loss of protective and stabilizing coastal vegetation communities. Storm surge and sea level rise now present new threats to the coastal zone.

For these reasons, CAFNEC regards coastal and mangrove ecosystems as endangered and therefore a moratorium should be placed on any future development permits for land within 100m or less than 1m above the current high water mark. CAFNEC argues that it is irresponsible for authorities to allow future residential development and investment within areas that are likely to be subject to permanent inundation in the near future. Local governments also require certainty and support in being able to restricting coastal development. Currently the development process ensures they do not stop inappropriate coastal development due to the threat of litigation. It is imperative this process be backed by legislation which ensures the threat of compensation removed if we are to protect both coastal environment and communities. Further, it is essential any lake or canal development proposals in the coastal zone or in floodplains be scrapped given the threat of inundation.

### **Water management and environmental flows**

The dominant regional ecosystems in the Far North are the Wet Tropics bio-region and the Great Barrier Reef. Both have recognised world, national and state heritage values of significance. The region is further characterized by short, fast flowing streams and rivers which carry significant flows into the Reef lagoon at various times throughout the year. Given the extensive reach of intensive agriculture throughout the region's coastal floodplains, and the high levels of sediment volume carried within its riparian systems, the preservation of (at a minimum) current levels of environmental flow are critical for the health of the Reef and the on-going health of the Wet Tropics rainforests. Maintaining, and enhancing, these flows will be critical in the face of regional climate change impacts.

There is some evidence that the Great Barrier Reef relies on monsoonal flows from fresh water estuaries, which cools the sea water and reef ecosystems. This phenomenon will be particularly valuable in the event of global warming and rising sea water temperatures, and may slow the rate of coral bleaching. Any planning for water infrastructure should take this into account, so as to minimize impact on environmental flows. The Plan should also recognize the significance of environmental flows and seasonal flushing of river ecosystems.

### **Preserving Scenic Amenity and Landscape Features**

The economy of Far North Queensland, in particular our regional capital, Cairns, is highly dependant on the tourism sector, which underpins about half the regional economy – *The Cairns 2020/20250 Business Review Manual*. Most tourists are attracted by the natural beauty and uniqueness of our world heritage listed tropical rainforests, the Great Barrier Reef and tropical coastline. Many tourists are also attracted by the unique rainforest Aboriginal culture of the region. The protection and conservation of the visual wonder and intrinsic value of our natural environment in the context of a vibrant cultural landscape, is therefore essential to supporting our local economy. This means that the

areas outstanding natural attributes and scenic beauty must be protected from inappropriate development. Recognising Aboriginal values and their right of engagement in the management of the region's cultural landscapes is also essential.

The scenic rim of Cairns is particularly at threat from rogue development, and must be protected within the Plan from visually inappropriate and obtrusive development.

### **Concerns about the proposed Statutory Planning Process TOR and broader process**

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In the month of consultation that CAFNEC has conducted with representatives of community organisations regarding the Draft Terms of Reference, there has been a comprehensive and categorical response that the document is inadequate. The resounding sentiment is that the document lacks specificity and fails to provide any real direction or objectivity as a stated purpose as a Term of Reference.

Although the regional vision includes overarching principles, it is starkly obvious that there is little capacity within the current Draft Terms of Reference to practically develop and implement the sustainable and viable strategies for world best practice planning for the Far North region.

Whilst we appreciate the State is eager to expedite this Plan, there needs to be a balance with adequate community participation. CAFNEC supports proper engagement with the Aboriginal community using the bodies and mechanisms recognized as the appropriate channels for such engagement by the local Indigenous communities. Whilst we recognise the need to have timeframes and deadlines, we support a process that aims to achieve the best outcomes, even if this means such deadlines are not met, rather than compromising outcomes to fit into pressured timeframes. CAFNEC fears that if time frames are unrealistic, that genuine community engagement will be the component of process which will suffer, and the first to drop off the agenda.

### **Limitations of the SEQ Plan**

CAFNEC does not support the application of a template for the *FNQ 2025 Plan* which arises from inadequate past formats or formats developed for other regions. Far North Queensland is not SEQ, and it is evident from our consultations that many in our region's communities value the marked differences between FNQ and SEQ.

Key learnings from the SEQ planning process indicate that this Plan:

1. fails to take into account ecological carrying capacity for the region;
2. fails to set adequate parameters for sustainable urban and rural residential expansion in the context of regional habitat connectivity;
3. expressly states that there is no intended priority between regional policies;
4. fails to include a greenhouse policy;
5. fails to protect identified nature conservation areas under the regulatory process; and
6. failed to make resourcing provisions to adequately map identified nature conservation areas and to include such mapping in the Plan.

### **Limitations of FNQ 2010**

It is clear that FNQ 2010 failed to deliver sustainable development options for the region, a failure arising as a direct consequence of this plan's narrow focus on development-dominated issues. It is essential that future planning for the FNQ region incorporate a

holistic approach to integrated regional planning encompassing environmental, social, cultural and economic outcomes. Best practice planning requires more thought than unilateral acceptance of ever-increasing populations, escalating resource use and massive development.

The most relevant FNQ regional planning documents are the *Sustaining the Wet Tropics – A Regional Plan for Natural Resource Management 2004 – 2008* and the *Caring for Country and Culture: Wet Tropics Aboriginal Cultural and Natural Resource Management Plan*. These documents clearly define regional assets, management targets including resource condition targets and action targets. These plans are based in hard science and quantifiable research, and the culturally appropriate engagement of Aboriginal people. These plans do reflect the unique characteristics of our region and the diversity of communities' resident here.

This document largely ignored environmental considerations and imposed Myola/Koah urbanization without looking at the alternative areas which are available. Shifting urban areas away from World Heritage areas should be considered to reduce the impact of domestic animals on sensitive habitat and endangered species (such as Cassowaries).

### **Urban footprint model**

CAFNEC recognises the potential of the urban footprint model to deliver positive outcomes. We commend any attempts to contain urban sprawl, as we regard unregulated, sprawling residential development as a major factor contributing to environmental decline. However it is essential that the edge of the footprint is based of thorough community engagement and on the best environmental and scientific data.

We recognise that an urban footprint defines a land use area, however CAFNEC contends that the principles of sustainability and viability must apply across the entire region, whether within or without the footprint. We do not believe that a fragmented approach to defining urban footprints can generates an adequate representation of urbanization and associated impacts at the regional scale. During the course of the planning process we will be identifying areas which we think are appropriate for urban development and those which should be protected from it.

### **Implementation**

The value of the Plan is how it is put into practice. In most planning legislation there is a large amount of rhetoric and environmental terms and language, however these sentiments have made little to change to the status quo. The commitment of government will be measured not in rhetoric, but in the ability for clear and binding measures to be implemented and practiced.

Any legislative and policy changes required in this and any other related Act which are required to give the regional Plan teeth, need to be undertaken also. Unless this Plan achieves sustainability, this whole exercise is pointless.

### **Enforcement**

As is well known, legislative arrangements can be perfect, but without adequate resources deployed to enforce them, they too are useless. CAFNEC strongly advises that there is more funding allocated to enforcement of planning legislation, for both councils and developers, and tougher punishment and prohibitions are introduced for non-compliance.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Good policy includes a process for monitoring and evaluation, including the following...

- Targets/Indicators/ Triggers/ Measurement
- Data collection and analysis
- Need to anticipate not just work off past trends
- Collaboration and funding

## **Review**

Any review should improve sustainability.

## **Community Engagement**

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During any regional planning process the views and perspectives of the community must be of paramount importance. CAFNEC contends that the special environmental and cultural significance of the region necessitates key representation from local environmental, scientific, Aboriginal and natural resource management stakeholders at the level of the FNQ Regional Planning Advisory Committee (FNQ RPAC), the FNQ Technical Advisory Group as well as through accredited community reference groups. Although the DLGPSR “desires that the RPAC be streamlined...to ensure efficient and effective operation”, it is a strongly held view within the community that this approach will be detrimental to genuine representation and participation.

A streamlined RPAC is positive only if it does not come at a cost to equal access and representation of key stakeholders within the region. A mere four representatives from state agencies and community and stakeholder groups does not provide much space for such representation to occur. CAFNEC is concerned that representation on the RPAC is determined on a purely numbers basis rather than by a requirement to consult sufficiently and effectively, as is a stated objective in the Draft TOR: Section 2.2.

From this criterion, we make the following requests:

The DLGPSR compile a list of key stakeholders wishing to participate in the RPAC and the TWG. From that list there should be representation from the following...

- A peak environmental group(recognized as a suitable member by the broader FNQ environmental movement).
  - A principal natural resource management group; and a
  - Aboriginal representative group.
- That a member of the environment sector (recognised as a suitable member by the broader FNQ environment groups) be formally endorsed as one of the four stakeholder representatives on the FNQ RPAC as per the Draft Terms of Reference section 2.3. water mark

CAFNEC nominates Mr. John Rainbird, (Coordinator of CAFNEC) to serve as a stakeholder representative on the FNQ RPAC.

- That the FNQ Regional Plan Technical Working Group contains specific expertise in environmental planning issues.

CAFNEC nominates Dr. Rosemary Hill, (Planner and Senior Scientist, Tropical Landscapes CSIRO), to serve as a member of the Technical Advisory Group.

- That the CAFNEC FNQ2025 Steering Committee is formally endorsed as a community working groups to be consulted by the Department as per section 2.6 of the Draft Terms of Reference.

CAFNEC also recommends that a director from FNQ NRM Ltd be included on the RPAC.

Formal opportunities for all members of the Far North Queensland community to respond and contribute to the regional planning process are essential to ensure that the plan meets the needs of its constituents. Community consultation should be designed so that different sectors of the community have multiple opportunities for contributing to the planning that meet their unique needs. Proper and sincere engagement with the wider community means that open forums, submission processes, sector based workshops and public presentations are regular, well planned and well resourced. True public consultation requires public meetings where the officials charged with drafting the Plan can listen to public input *before* they create the first draft, rather than presenting the public with the draft once it is complete.

The interests of Aboriginal people who are Traditional Owners of country in the region are of particular importance and must be included at all stages of the process with due respect to cultural protocols. Large areas of the region are subject to the Wet Tropics Regional Agreement which sets out the requirements of Aboriginal engagement at all levels of planning within the region. In addition, the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities must be provided with the opportunity to determine how they want to be involved.

## **Recommendations**

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CAFNEC recommends that:

1. The Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation take an innovative and visionary approach to develop a world class plan for a world class environment.
2. The Terms of Reference are amended to ensure that sustainability and viability are the foundations for building a statutory Regional Plan for the Far North (Refer to Appendix 1).
3. The Department appropriately recognise the unique values of the region as a bio-cultural landscape of global significance.
4. That the limitations and constraints of regional planning are recognised and that the State develops legislative and policy responses to address these limitations to ensure the core intentions of Ecologically Sustainable Development can actually be realized through the Plan.
5. That the *SEQ plan* and *FNQ 2010* are not applied as templates in direct overlay in *FNQ2025*.

6. That more appropriate regional planning documents (eg: regional NRM Plan, Aboriginal Plan) be used in the consultation, development and implementation of *FNQ2025*.
7. Key environmental sustainability indicators are immediately developed based on existing work such as the *EPA's State of the Environment* reporting. This must be incorporated into the role and scope and work program within the TOR (Refer Appendix 1) in order to establish baseline data to inform the planning phase of the plan, and not just for monitoring and review;
8. Funding is made available for the development and monitoring of these indicators
9. Alternative Planning Pathways are required to be considered within the plan with consideration to indicator thresholds (Refer appendix 1)
10. The plan is integrated within the context of regional landscapes and holistic in terms of a strategic whole of government approach.
11. The plan is designed around the key sustainability issues of:
  - Resilience to climate change
  - Habitat and biodiversity conservation
  - Water management
  - Energy efficiency
  - Public transport
  - Family and social functionality
  - Disaster management
  - Protecting Indigenous culture and aspirations.
12. A regional authority is given the appropriate powers to enforce the final plan. Having a regional authority would be a far more effective implementation and management. It would help build a stronger relationship between DLGPSR and the community, and allow the staff to directly understand and respond to the local issues.
13. Any review or amendments of the plan should only serve to enhance sustainability.
14. Appropriate and rigorous indicators are used to assess sustainability, environmental and community well being.
15. Thresholds/targets are identified for these indicators
16. Funding is made available for the development and monitoring of these indicators
17. That these indicators are used directly to prepare, implement, monitor, enforce, review and evaluate the plan.

18. That rather than a static plan, a dynamic adaptive management approach is taken based upon sustainability and the precautionary principle.
19. Departmental staff and other appropriate bodies are sufficiently funded and resourced to implement and enforce the plan.
20. That the department invests adequately in and undertakes meaningful and adequate community engagement.
21. That the RPAC be set up to reflect proper representation of key interests rather than be limited by an arbitrary number of positions which severely restrict adequate representation input.
22. Timeframes and deadlines are revised if necessary to maintain an onus on meaningful and adequate community engagement.

## **Specific requests**

CAFNEC requests that:

1. That a member of the environment sector (recognised as a suitable member by the broader FNQ environment groups) be formally endorsed as one of the four stakeholder representatives on the FNQ RPAC as per the Draft Terms of Reference section 2.3.

CAFNEC nominates Mr. John Rainbird to serve as a stakeholder representative on the FNQ RPAC.

2. That the technical advisory group contains specific expertise in environmental planning issues.

CAFNEC nominates Ms Rosemary Hill to serve as a member of the Technical Advisory Group.

3. That the CAFNEC FNQ2025 Steering Committee is formally endorsed as a community working group to be consulted by the Department as per section 2.6 of the Draft Terms of Reference.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Recommended changes to Draft Terms of Reference FNQ 2025 Regional Plan**

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As qualified by our statements, recommendations and requests outlined above, CAFNEC sees the need for particular changes to be made to the Draft Terms of Reference in order to facilitate environmental sustainability in planning for viable communities and regional growth.

These changes have been inserted and tracked, with comments where appropriate, into the Draft Terms of Reference provided by the DLGPSR.

## APPENDIX 2

### About CAFNEC

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CAFNEC is the peak community organisation for environmental protection and sustainability in Far North Queensland. CAFNEC is a not-for-profit organisation that was formed in 1981 by concerned members of the Far North Queensland community seeking better protection for Far North Queensland's natural environment. Since CAFNEC's establishment it has been the focal point for environmental action and education in the region.

CAFNEC's geographic range of interest stretches from Cardwell in the south to the Torres Straits in the north and out to the northern Gulf of Carpentaria in the west. This region includes three World Heritage areas including the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

CAFNEC's key functions include:

- to promote and engage in activities and which encourage and contribute to the knowledge, protection, and restoration of the natural environment and associated processes; to encourage,
- promote and participate in activities which contribute to the environmentally sustainable use of resources
- Represent environmental interests in the Far North region to government, tourism, agricultural/industry and other sectors of the community
- Sponsoring grants for projects and research on matters relating to the region's environment
- Maintaining an easily accessible community library and resource centre with materials relating to environmental issues
- Aiding the establishment of, and providing support to, like-minded local organisations; and
- Raising awareness and understanding of environmental issues to members and the wider community.

CAFNEC represents a wide range of individual community members and has strong links with other environmental and conservation organisations. Over the last 25 years CAFNEC has demonstrated its ability to advocate for the environmental concerns of local people. We have developed an intimate knowledge of the key environmental and sustainability issues in the region and have the ability to draw on a wide range of expertise in environmental conservation and natural resource management issues. CAFNEC plays an important role within the broader environmental movement, collaborating with other organisations focusing on environmental issues of state, national and international importance.