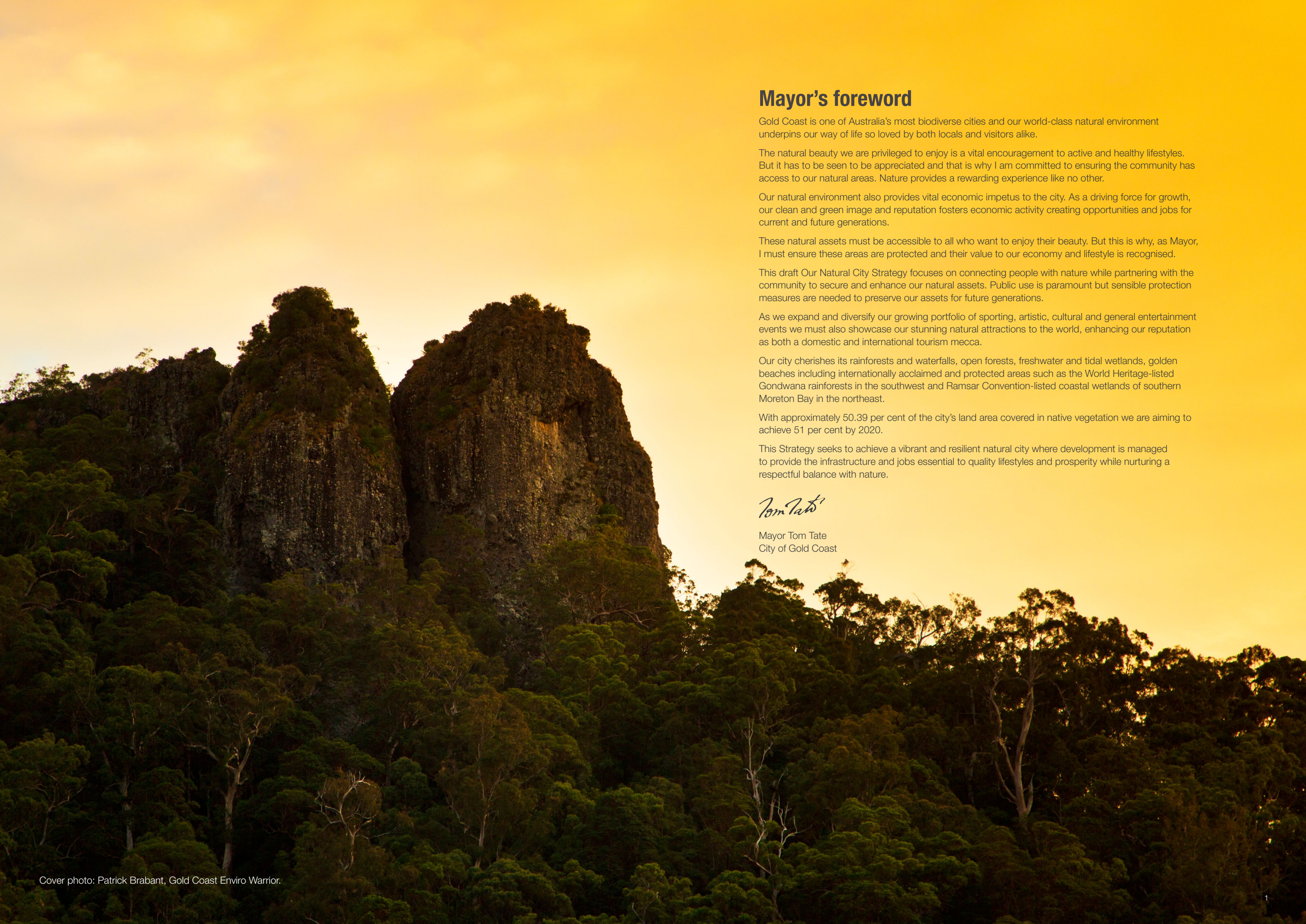


Our Natural City Strategy

Draft Strategy





Mayor's foreword

Gold Coast is one of Australia's most biodiverse cities and our world-class natural environment underpins our way of life so loved by both locals and visitors alike.

The natural beauty we are privileged to enjoy is a vital encouragement to active and healthy lifestyles. But it has to be seen to be appreciated and that is why I am committed to ensuring the community has access to our natural areas. Nature provides a rewarding experience like no other.

Our natural environment also provides vital economic impetus to the city. As a driving force for growth, our clean and green image and reputation fosters economic activity creating opportunities and jobs for current and future generations.

These natural assets must be accessible to all who want to enjoy their beauty. But this is why, as Mayor, I must ensure these areas are protected and their value to our economy and lifestyle is recognised.

This draft Our Natural City Strategy focuses on connecting people with nature while partnering with the community to secure and enhance our natural assets. Public use is paramount but sensible protection measures are needed to preserve our assets for future generations.

As we expand and diversify our growing portfolio of sporting, artistic, cultural and general entertainment events we must also showcase our stunning natural attractions to the world, enhancing our reputation as both a domestic and international tourism mecca.

Our city cherishes its rainforests and waterfalls, open forests, freshwater and tidal wetlands, golden beaches including internationally acclaimed and protected areas such as the World Heritage-listed Gondwana rainforests in the southwest and Ramsar Convention-listed coastal wetlands of southern Moreton Bay in the northeast.

With approximately 50.39 per cent of the city's land area covered in native vegetation we are aiming to achieve 51 per cent by 2020.

This Strategy seeks to achieve a vibrant and resilient natural city where development is managed to provide the infrastructure and jobs essential to quality lifestyles and prosperity while nurturing a respectful balance with nature.

Mayor Tom Tate
City of Gold Coast



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Photo: Todd Burrows

Photo: Todd Burrows

Introduction

Our Natural City

The Gold Coast is Australia's sixth largest city, located within the country's fastest growing region. Boasting a network of natural assets that are essential to our lifestyle and reputation as an international visitor destination, it is imperative we enhance and safeguard these areas for the generations to come, to access and enjoy.

Our Natural City Strategy recognises that the natural environment underpins our wellbeing, cultural identity, economy, tourism and overall prosperity while supporting the City of Gold Coast's (the City) vision themes of place, prosperity and people.

Building on and complementing existing City initiatives such as the City Plan and Nature Based Recreation Plan, Our Natural City Strategy focuses on connecting people with nature, protecting places for nature and partnering with the community to secure and enhance our natural assets.

One of the City's priorities is to ensure we live in balance with nature. This Strategy encourages community access and use of the city's hidden natural gems while safeguarding our beaches, wetlands, waterways, rainforests, bushland, coastal and marine environments and the wildlife these habitats support.

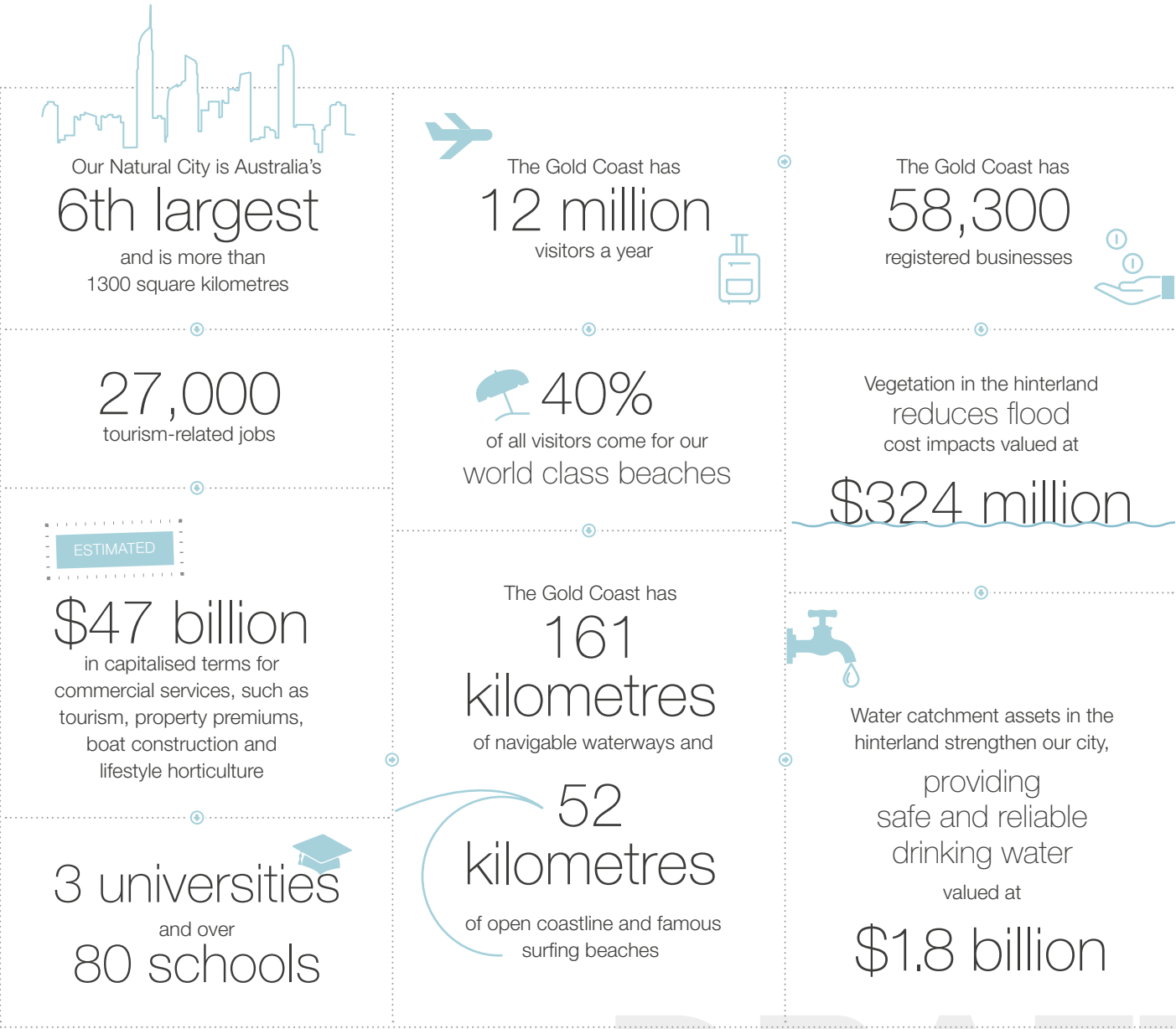
Our Natural City Strategy responds to current and emerging opportunities with cost-effective and practical initiatives to enhance, restore and connect our natural assets and biodiversity while accommodating growth of the city.

The importance of our natural assets is recognised with 13 key priority actions to deliver three strategic outcomes over a four-year period (2017 to 2021). Our vision is to achieve a prosperous and resilient natural city.

Australia's biggest strength is its world-class nature, well regarded from all markets and core to our global tourism offering.

CONSUMER DEMAND PROJECT
TOURISM AUSTRALIA

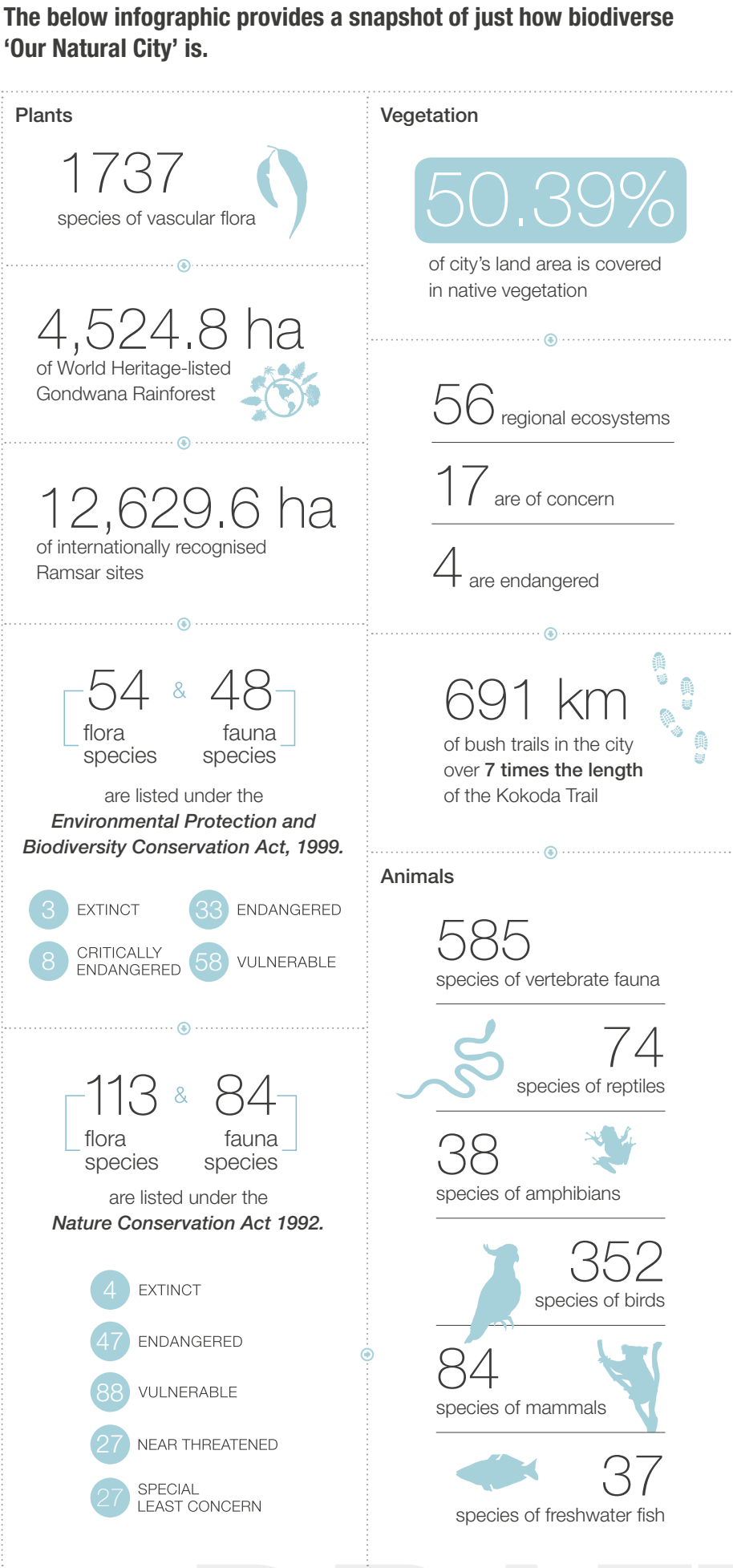
Our natural assets underpin our future economy, lifestyle and reputation





Our city is naturally unique

The Gold Coast is one of Australia’s most biodiverse cities. It includes internationally-acclaimed areas such as the World Heritage-listed Gondwana Rainforests in the southwest and the Ramsar Convention-listed coastal wetlands of southern Moreton Bay in the northeast. One of the largest upland subtropical rainforest remnants in the world is situated within the Border Ranges Biodiversity Hotspot (one of only 15 biodiversity hotspots in Australia). Our assets include rainforest and waterfalls, open forests, freshwater and tidal wetlands, including the golden beaches bordering the Pacific Ocean.



Our strategic intent

Our strategic intent for key natural asset areas is detailed below. This information corresponds with the intended natural asset network map (opposite). The Strategy seeks to achieve balance by focusing our efforts on securing the resilience of the intended natural asset network, while facilitating growth primarily within the urban areas of the city.

Strategic intent for key natural asset areas

Core habitat systems

Coastal wetlands and islands

Internationally significant and listed under the Ramsar Convention, the coastal wetlands and islands provide critical habitat for significant populations of nationally and regionally threatened species. The protection of these sensitive areas will be balanced with providing appropriate nature-based recreation and tourism opportunities. The City will continue to support these aquatic and marine ecosystems and their ecological processes to help species and ecosystems be resilient to natural hazards.

Hinterland

The Gold Coast hinterland contains key elements of the World Heritage-listed Gondwana Rainforests of Australia and is home to 200 rare or threatened plant and animal species. Maintaining this outstanding network of natural areas by improving the coverage, diversity and condition of these unique ecosystems will safeguard species diversity and increase opportunities for appropriate nature-based recreation and tourism across public and private land.

Corridors

Coastal dunes critical corridor

The coastal dunes form a significant north to south corridor and are a prime focus for recreational activity and tourism. Improving corridor connectivity and stability through the protection and restoration of dune vegetation will help conserve our unique, sensitive and significant terrestrial and marine ecosystems and reduce impacts from natural hazards on our beaches.

Critical corridors

The critical corridors form the backbone of the Gold Coast and provide the linkage from the hinterland to the coast. Protecting the ecological function of corridors to provide habitat and assist movement of flora and fauna will enable ecosystems to be resilient to natural hazards. This will involve the protection and management of existing vegetation and restoration of degraded areas in strategic locations.

Significant urban biodiversity

Substantial remnants

Substantial remnants support significant populations of threatened species and are highly valued by the local community. There are only a number of these patches of established native vegetation within the urban area.

Playing a critical role in maintaining the city's viable koala population, substantial remnants will be maintained by enhancing their coverage, diversity and condition through avoiding and managing impacts of vegetation clearing, pests, fire, vehicle access, fragmentation and other urban impacts.

Urban biodiversity

Flora and fauna within the urban area is an important part of the Gold Coast's DNA.

Partnering with government, landowners, businesses, research institutions and the community to protect and restore poorly represented regional ecosystems, priority habitat sites and vegetated corridors connecting habitats will improve our biodiversity.

Other

Gold Coast Central Park

Centrally located, this multi-purpose area of open space will be enhanced to promote active and passive recreational use of the area while safeguarding conservation, heritage, water catchment and stormwater management functions. The mapped area represents the City owned assets.

Vegetation

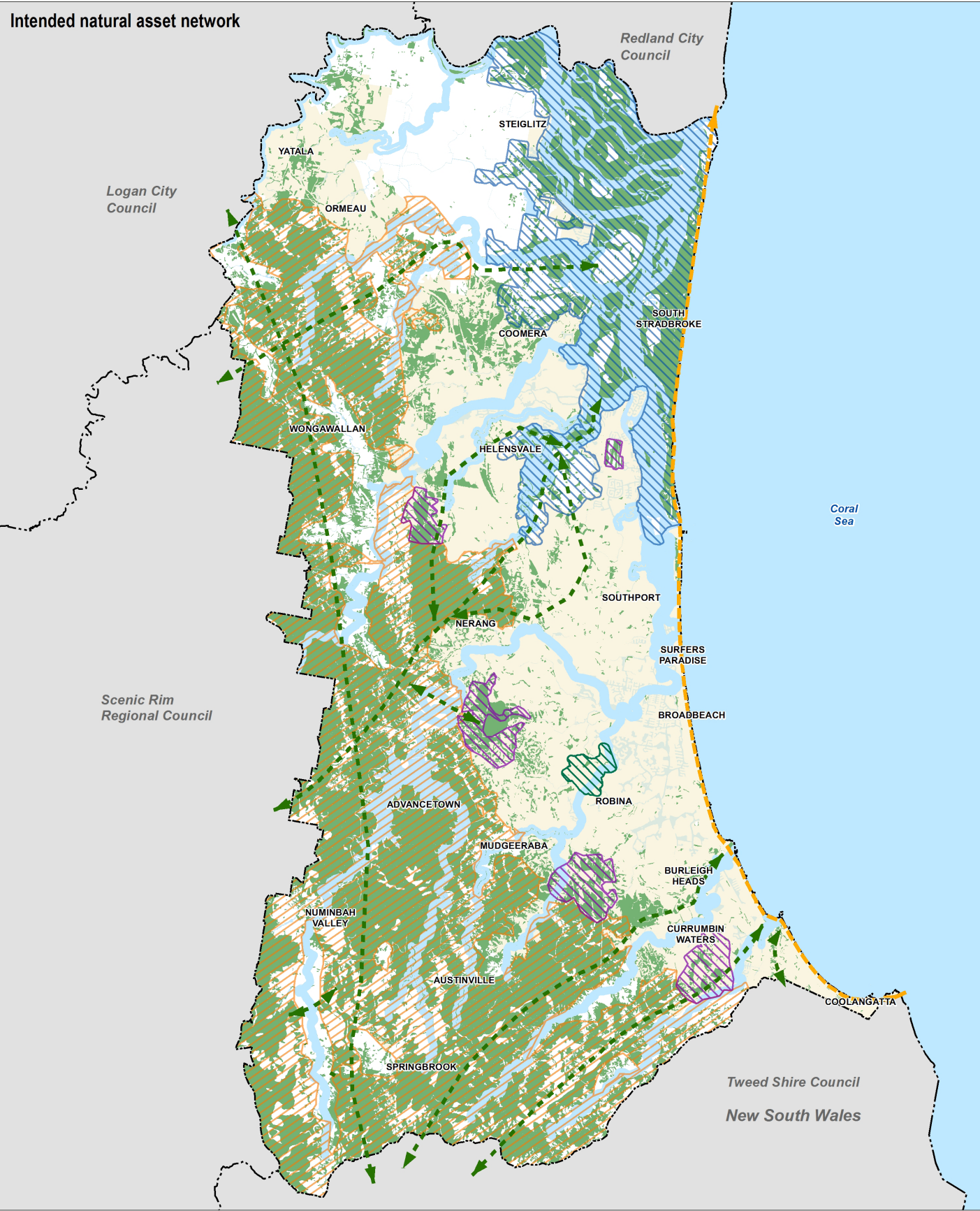
The Gold Coast is one of the most biodiverse cites in Australia with 50.39% of the land area covered in native vegetation. The importance of conserving and enhancing our natural asset network is evident by the Gold Coast 2020 target of 51% vegetation coverage by the year 2020.

In urban areas (outside critical corridors and substantial remnants) high priority vegetation will be protected. The loss of medium priority vegetation will be offset by replacing it in strategic locations and disturbance to general priority vegetation will be minimised. Outside urban areas, the coverage, diversity and condition of native vegetation will be enhanced.

Major waterways

Waterways underpin the Gold Coast's iconic lifestyle. Carefully balancing the protection of these sensitive habitat areas with appropriate nature-based recreation and tourism opportunities is important for our economy, tourism and city reputation.

Safeguarding the terrestrial, aquatic and marine ecosystems of waterways and wetlands will enhance their ecological function as wildlife corridors. Improving water quality will ultimately benefit our water-based recreation and lifestyle.



Core habitat systems

- Coastal wetlands and islands core habitat
- Hinterland core habitat

Critical corridors

- Coastal dunes critical corridor
- Critical corridor

Significant urban biodiversity

- Substantial remnant
- Urban biodiversity

Other

- Gold Coast Central Park
- Rural
- Vegetation
- Major waterways

Natural asset network

A connected natural asset network is vital for the protection of terrestrial, aquatic and marine ecosystems and their ecological processes. It increases the resilience of priority species and ecosystems to natural hazards and provides opportunities for balancing the protection of habitat areas with appropriate nature-based recreation and tourism opportunities.

The city's connected natural asset network occurs across both private and public land. It has been progressively established over decades through a range of regulatory and voluntary conservation initiatives. These initiatives form the foundation for the existing natural asset network and will be improved and applied to expand the network in the future.

The existing natural asset network extends across more than 30 per cent of the city's land area¹. It highlights the importance of partnerships in delivering outcomes across State Government managed natural areas, City managed natural areas and natural asset management activities on private land.

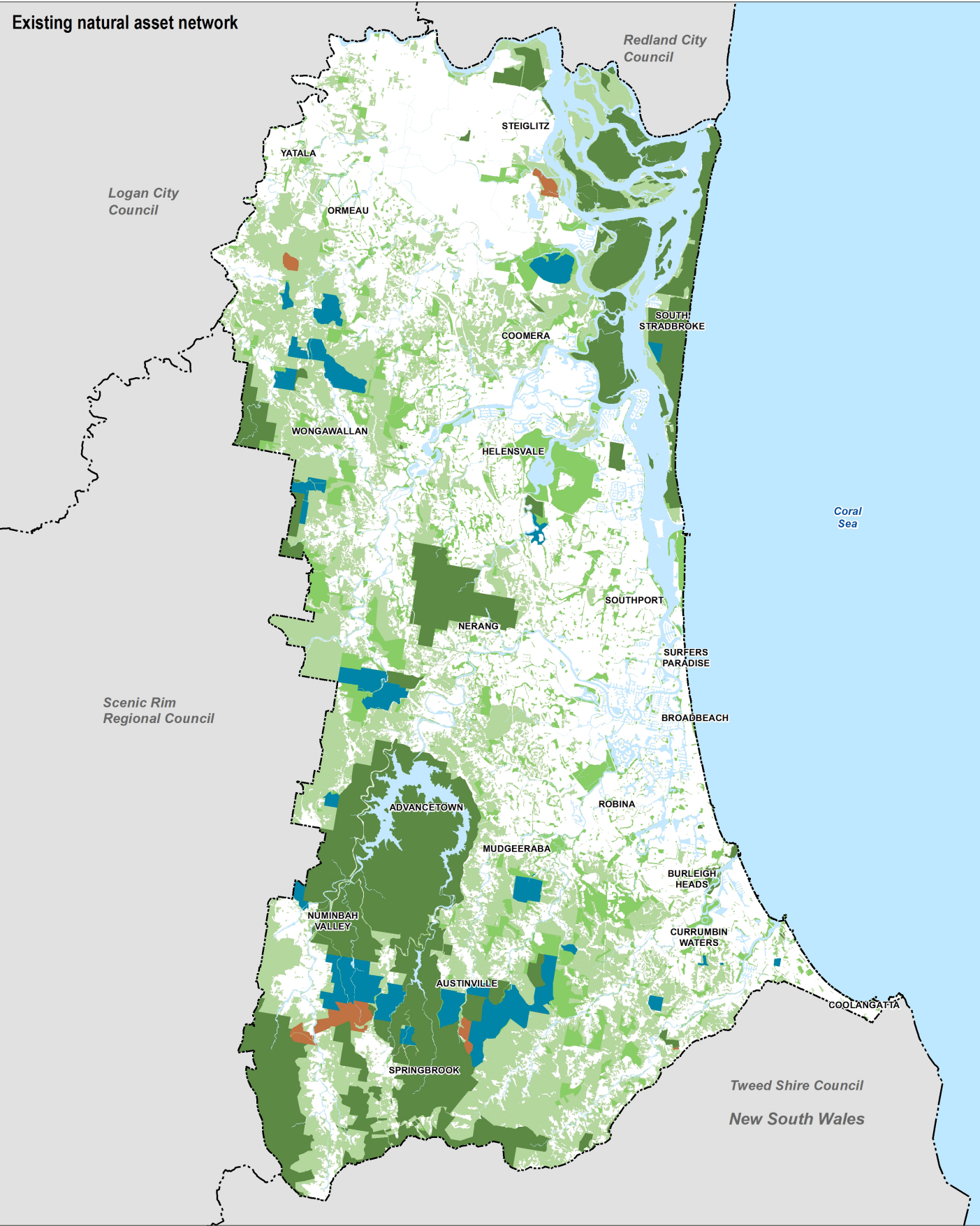
Native vegetation occurs both within and outside managed natural areas on both public and private land. It covers 50.39 per cent of the city's land area of 65,175 hectares¹, providing important habitat for the city's diverse range of plants and animals. The City has set a target that 51 per cent of the city land area will be covered in native vegetation by 2020.

A summary of the natural asset network is provided below and State Government and City managed natural areas are shown on the natural asset network map (opposite).

Category of natural area	Area (ha)	% of City land area
State Protected Areas		
National Park	10,233	7.9
Conservation Park	4460	3.4
Nature Refuge	1112	0.9
Dam Catchment	5902	4.5
City managed		
Natural Area Reserve (includes 4362 hectares acquired for natural asset protection)	12,717	9.8
Council Conservation Partnerships		
Higher VCA	342	0.3
General VCA	268	0.2
Land for Wildlife ²	4179	3.2
Statutory Environmental Covenant	836	0.6

¹ City land area is defined as total city area excluding coastal and marine areas but including terrestrial and wetland areas. It equates to the area of the city covered by native vegetation before European settlement (129,339 hectares).

² These initiatives do not protect natural assets under legislation however, they do provide important community engagement and capacity-building opportunities to assist private landholders in managing natural asset values on their land.



City protected areas

Open space acquisition

Natural area reserve

State protected areas

Nature refuge

Queensland estate

Other

Vegetation

Major waterways

Current trends and issues

The following trends and issues are likely to have a significant impact on how we manage the city’s natural assets into the future. The opportunities they present underpin the strategic direction and priority actions for this Strategy.

Trend or issue	Implications or opportunities
Continued loss of native vegetation due to a growing city	An unavoidable loss of native vegetation across the city’s urban areas will occur during the next 10-15 years to cater for population growth. Innovative collaboration and partnerships will help offset this loss and restore strategically located natural assets in accordance with the <i>Gold Coast 2020 Corporate Plan</i> .
Increasing community awareness of the importance of our natural assets in sustaining our lifestyle	Results of the <i>Gold Coast 2020</i> city visioning consultation and City Plan consultation confirm the community is increasingly aware of how natural assets support lifestyle and prosperity and affirm there is an expectation for our natural assets to continue to be a priority. Conserving appropriate natural assets is essential for healthy drinking water, clean air, food production and the city’s resilience into the future.
Increasing interest by residents and visitors in connecting with nature	Our residents want to live in a city where they can access and enjoy nature. Residents and visitors need targeted information and a range of opportunities to easily interact and connect with nature in ways that suit their individual needs.
Increasing importance of the environment and nature in the city’s reputation	Our natural assets are recognised as a key element of city desirability, enhancing our international reputation. The City can capitalise on this by integrating natural assets into our strategic planning and marketing tools.
Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games™ – GC2018	GC2018 presents the opportunity to showcase our natural assets to the world and our residents that provide lasting legacies for our natural asset network, promoting ecotourism and nature-based recreation activities. Opportunities to secure funding for conservation initiatives, leveraged through partnerships, will be pursued.
Increasing opportunities for partnerships in enhancing our natural assets.	Our community wants to be active in nature or volunteer in land restoration activities, restore their own land or contribute scientific knowledge or resources to enhancing our natural assets. Partnership programs can be expanded to harness the growing interest in nature conservation. Potential partners include universities, businesses, private landholders, residents and visitors, volunteers, community groups, government and other relevant agencies.
Increased visitation of natural assets by residents and visitors	Balancing protection and enhancement of natural assets with appropriate nature-based recreation and tourism opportunities requires deliberate planning and infrastructure investment.
Natural hazard impacts and long-term ecosystem changes	A connected network of natural assets will allow ecosystems and wildlife to adapt to ecosystem changes resulting from natural hazards. Strategic planning and investment in a range of conservation initiatives is required to achieve enhanced resilience and a functioning citywide natural asset network across public and private lands.
Finite resources to manage natural assets and achieve multiple benefits	Innovative, cost-effective and efficient measures must be used to protect and manage our natural assets. These include building partnerships, improving conservation programs, seeking alternative funding sources and ensuring expenditure achieves multiple benefits. For example, vegetation restoration along a waterway provides wildlife habitat values and corridor connectivity, improves water quality and reduces flood hazard risk by slowing runoff into waterways.

Vision

Our Natural City – a prosperous and resilient natural city

The long-term protection of our natural assets has many benefits for the Gold Coast – providing wonderful places and resources for the people who live here; attracting new visitors and boosting our economic performance; enhancing our ability to adapt and respond to natural hazards and most importantly, protecting the natural assets that contribute to our wellbeing, cultural identity, economy, tourism and overall prosperity.

Strategic outcomes

This vision will be achieved by working to three strategic outcomes:





People in nature

Our residents and visitors connect with nature and value its contribution to our city's health, economic prosperity and lifestyle.

What this means for the community:

Our residents and visitors will have opportunities to connect with the city's natural assets. These connections will increase access, interaction, enjoyment and enhance an appreciation of:

- the diverse natural areas that can be accessed and enjoyed by visitors and residents
- the intrinsic value of nature and our city's unique biodiversity
- how nature underpins our lifestyle, health, cultural identity and economic prosperity
- how important nature is in providing essential services such as fresh drinking water, clean air, healthy food and resilience against natural hazards
- why we need to protect and improve core habitat areas, substantial remnants, critical corridors, wetlands and waterways that connect beaches and coastal habitats to hinterland ranges and rainforests
- how nature supports the Gold Coast's reputation as a desirable place to live, visit and invest in nature conservation activities and why it is important to be involved in the protection, restoration and connection of our natural assets.



Photo: Jo-Anne Driessens

Gold Coast, South Stradbroke Island Indigenous Artist Camp 2017, nature education walk.

Key priority actions

1.1 Action

Implement key recommendations of the City's *Nature Based Recreation Plan* that provide opportunities for people to connect with and appreciate nature while actively supporting nature conservation outcomes.

Description

Key projects and recommendations from the *Nature Based Recreation Plan* will deliver infrastructure and amenities that support the way people access, learn about and enjoy natural areas in appropriate locations.

Some project examples for delivery consideration over the coming years include:

- enhancing the experience of the Springbrook Mountain to Tallebudgera Valley Cream Track walk
- Wyangan Valley multi-use track linkages
- Schusters Park pathways
- a track to connect Raintree Glen with Shelter Road in Coombabah Lakelands Conservation Area
- community infrastructure including nature-based recreation trails
- community infrastructure, directional and interpretive signage to enhance visitor experience.

We will audit existing infrastructure and amenities to identify if upgrades are required to foot bridges, directional and interpretative signage. This infrastructure will be maintained across the network of our natural area reserves.

This action will also contribute to Strategic Outcome 2 – Places for Nature.

1.2 Action

Implement an *Into Nature* program to:

- enjoy, explore, feel and engage residents and visitors with nature
- build awareness and understanding of the city's unique natural assets
- promote, support and reward nature conservation partnerships with residents, community groups, schools and research institutions, business, and the development industry.

Description

Implement a broad community participation program to build upon existing opportunities (i.e. *Naturally GC*) for residents and visitors to access, explore, experience and be active in our natural asset areas while safeguarding nature through:

- resources to encourage discovery, exploration and enjoyment of natural areas
- practical advice and information for Gold Coast residents to create their own green space
- community and citizen science activities
- partnerships with residents, schools, community groups and research institutions
- further enhance and integrate our existing environmental community programs.

These initiatives will help deliver Strategic Outcome 2 – Places for Nature and Strategic Outcome 3 – Partners with Nature and will showcase our natural assets in the lead up, during and as a legacy of GC2018.

1.3 Action

Explore and support opportunities in the cultural space to promote our natural assets and their connections to our history, cultural identity and heritage, landscape character, economic prosperity and lifestyle.

Description

We will continue to support key cultural events which utilise and highlight our key natural assets such as the City of Gold Coast Culture Festival, Swell Festival and Bleach Festival. These initiatives will also showcase our natural environment in the lead up to, during and post GC2018.



Photo: Jo-Anne Driessens

City Officer, Todd Burrows and artist, Kiana Larkins on the nature education walk, Gold Coast, South Stradbroke Island Indigenous Artist Camp 2017.

1.4 Action

Pursue actions from the City's *Water Cycle Implementation Plan* to support community participation in catchment health and waterway initiatives.

Description

Bring together researchers, community groups, businesses, landholders, schools and visitors to help care for water environments.

Actions include planning and managing access to waterways for recreation, promoting water-themed play and events and supporting conservation partnership and community participation in restoring catchments.

How we will measure success:

- increased use of iNature Program
- increased conservation volunteering hours
- increased natural area reserve visits.



Places for nature

Our natural asset network sustains healthy, diverse and resilient habitats and includes areas for people to enjoy nature.

What this means for the community:

Our residents and visitors will enjoy and benefit from many different natural places.

We will:

- maintain and improve the extent, health, condition, quality and level of protection of our natural assets
- through the implementation of the City Plan, ensure new development protects native vegetation, wildlife habitats, critical corridors, wetlands, waterways and coastal environments in identified strategic areas and where applicable, offset the loss of native vegetation in other areas of the city
- recognise natural assets on public and private land as critical to building and maintaining a resilient, biodiverse city
- ensure the facilities and infrastructure within our natural assets are attractive and safe for use by residents and visitors
- ensure natural assets are a major contributor to the City's strategic long-term open space network
- manage the threat of natural hazards such as fire and pests to our natural assets and surrounding areas
- investigate opportunities to increase access to improve residents' and visitors' experience of our natural places
- provide and enable different outdoor experiences, such as bush walking, wildlife watching, kayaking, canoeing, relaxing, learning about nature and participating in tours
- carefully balance the protection of sensitive habitat areas with areas available for visitors and appropriate nature-based recreation and ecotourism opportunities.



Key priority actions

2.1 Action

Investigate collaborative monitoring and reporting arrangements on the health, condition, quality and protection of our city's natural assets to inform management actions.

Description

Work with research institutions, business and the community to share information, resources and understand responsibility.

Scientifically-based and repeatable data will monitor progress over time and help us understand the health, condition and quality of our natural assets to inform how best to prioritise their protection.

This will ensure that our natural assets can remain healthy and preserve biodiversity over time, while meeting nationally-accepted scientific standards to be “comprehensive, adequate and representative” (*Commonwealth of Australia (1999). Australian Guidelines for Establishing the National Reserve System. Environment Australia, Canberra*).

2.2 Action

Prioritise and implement management actions to improve the health, quality, condition and level of protection of our priority natural assets.

Description

Maximise and target the conservation efforts of the City and partners by identifying areas that support priority species and ecosystems. Measure the success of preserving these natural assets.

2.3 Action

Continue to implement the *City Plan*'s environmental policies to protect native vegetation, habitats, corridors, wetlands and waterways and where applicable, offset the loss of environmental values.

Description

The *City Plan*'s environmental policies will identify matters of environmental significance and preferred areas for development. It will require development to avoid, mitigate and offset the loss of specific environmental values.

Continue to refine and update the *City Plan* to align it with Federal, State and Local Government strategic environmental planning and policies.

In partnership with the development industry, review and improve the quality and criteria around developer- contributed assets to ensure they contribute positively to the city's natural asset network.

2.4 Action

Develop and implement buffer setbacks and city-wide classification for all waterways to provide clear guidance for development activity adjoining waterways.

Description

The Surface Water Environments Mapping (SWEM) Phase 2 project will develop a buffer setback map and a city-wide classification for all waterways. This scientifically-based definition of waterways and the required setbacks for adjoining development will provide clear guidance to improve the health of our waterways.

How we will measure success:

- increased native vegetation cover
- improved condition of native vegetation
- increased connectivity of natural assets
- increased permanent protection of land in strategic areas
- improved health of waterways
- increased area of native riparian vegetation
- improved natural asset accessibility.



Partners with nature

We partner across government, business, research institutions, landowners and the community to protect, restore, connect and manage our natural assets on public and private land.

What this means for the community:

Government departments, businesses, research institutions, landowners and the community are all stakeholders and can be directly involved in enhancing our natural assets. These partnership efforts will help us to:

- ensure more people feel proud about maintaining and improving one of the most biodiverse cities in Australia
- recognise and value how protecting, restoring, connecting and managing our city's natural assets and biodiversity contributes to sustaining our wellbeing, cultural identity, economy, tourism and overall prosperity
- inform and engage partners including all levels of government, landowners, businesses, research institutions and the community to enthusiastically participate in nature conservation activities.
- share resources, knowledge and shared commitment to manage our natural assets with partners.

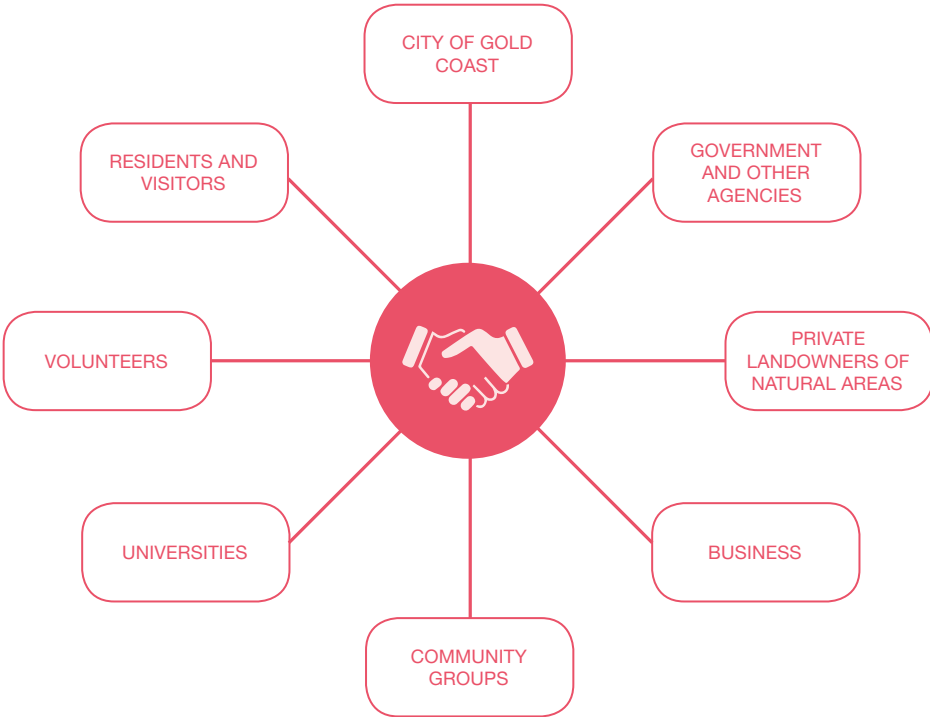


Photo left: City Officer, Saul Hondow, Mary and Andrew McNiece, Land for Wildlife and Nature Conservation Assistance Program partnership.



Key priority actions

3.1 Action

Establish and grow partnerships with private landowners, volunteer groups and government programs to increase the area of land protected, restored and connected.

Description

Build on the City’s existing programs such as the Conservation Partnerships Program, Beaches to Bushland Landcare and catchment and land care groups to identify and enable the most effective approach to working with landowners, volunteer groups, schools and government programs.

3.2 Action

Implement a suite of tools which are fiscally responsible to enable practical, community-focused partnerships to safeguard areas of high value for their environmental, recreational and hazard mitigation functions.

Description

Build on the successes of previous programs to protect and manage a city-wide natural asset network and identify cost-effective and enduring permanent protection of high priority areas.

3.3 Action

Partner with government, research institutions, business and the community to undertake targeted research and conservation actions on key vulnerable wildlife species in the city.

Description

Build on the successes of the Glossy Black Cockatoo, Cunningham’s Jute, Eastern Quoll, Water Mouse and Koala research projects to research and implement a city-wide management plan for priority vulnerable wildlife species.

3.4 Action

Continue to work collaboratively with stakeholders and rural landowners to coordinate bushfire, pest plant and animal management in the city’s hinterland.

Description

Work with landholders and stakeholders to coordinate and deliver land management activities that address threats to natural assets such as pest plants, animals and bushfire.

3.5 Action

Work with the development industry, major infrastructure providers and government to direct investments and activities in the permanent protection of important natural assets and provision of vegetation offsets arising from the *City Plan*, the *Queensland Government’s Environmental Offsets Act 2014* and the *Commonwealth’s Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, 1999* to help secure the city’s critical corridors, core habitat areas and substantial remnants.

Description

The *City Plan*’s environmental policies will identify matters of environmental significance and preferred areas for development. It will require development to avoid, mitigate or offset the loss of specific environmental values and contribute to a strategic conservation strategy.

Continue to update the *City Plan* in alignment with Federal, State and Local Government strategic environmental planning and policy positions.

In partnership with the development industry, we will also review and improve the quality and criteria around developer-contributed assets to ensure they have a positive impact on the city’s natural asset network.

Our development assessment and compliance practices will also ensure the permanent protection of important natural assets through mechanisms such as land dedication.

How we will measure success

Increased partnerships with:

- private landowners
- community organisations
- government departments
- business
- research institutions
- schools.



Professor Catherine Pickering, Environment Futures Research Institute, School of Environment, Griffith University.



Context

Evolution of the Strategy

This Strategy directly supports and is fundamental to achieving the City vision themes of place, prosperity and people and the following *Gold Coast 2020* outcomes:

- We live in balance with nature.
- Our city provides a choice of liveable places.
- We have a strong and thriving cultural economy.
- We are a globally recognised tourism destination.
- We are proud of our city.
- Our city embraces culture every day.
- We are an active and healthy community.
- Our city is safe.

Relationship between this Strategy and other corporate strategies and plans

The City’s approach to long-term planning integrates our *City Vision*, *Corporate Plan*, long-term asset management, financial plans and corporate strategies. The prominence of the natural assets in these key strategic documents reflects the integral role nature plays in the wellbeing, cultural identity, economy, tourism and overall prosperity of the city.

The relationship between *Our Natural City* and other City strategies and plans is through:

Supporting our City Vision and Corporate Plan – We live in balance with nature

- City Plan
 - Living with nature
- Culture Strategy
 - Spectacular natural environment
- Ocean Beaches Strategy
 - Our beaches are clean and healthy
 - Everyone can enjoy a beach experience
- Total Water Cycle Management Plan and the Draft Water Strategy
 - Healthy water environments
- Economic Development Strategy
 - Maintain city as attractive place to live, work and play

Influencing our lifestyle and reputation

- City Brand
 - Nature is part of our identity
- Destination Tourism Plan
 - Nature supports our city as a premier destination for local and international visitors
- City Reputation Strategic Plan
 - Nature is critical to our reputation as an attractive city to live and invest in
- Nature Based Recreation Plan
 - Embracing sustainable nature-based recreation
- Commonwealth Games 2015 Marketing and City Profile
 - Showcasing our city on the world stage

Current activities

We take a lead in looking after the city’s natural assets and actively partner to provide the infrastructure necessary for people to enjoy nature. Current activities include:

- our Conservation Partnerships Program and Nature Conservation Assistance Program to support private land owners restoring and protecting native habitat on their property
- our Beaches to Bushland Landcare and Naturally GC programs
- conservation plans to help vulnerable species
- managing the health of our water catchments and waterways and restoring degraded habitat areas
- strategic land use planning to protect our natural assets from the impacts of development
- natural area reserve planning to guide day-to-day management
- managing pests, undertaking proactive bushfire management and improving wildlife linkages between our natural assets to improve the health and habitat value of our bushland
- partnering with universities to research and support our city’s natural assets and conservation programs.

The City manages over 13,000 hectares of natural assets protecting a significant proportion of our city’s biodiversity values through ecological restoration and provides places and infrastructure for people to connect with and enjoy nature.

Our natural assets contribute to our air and water quality, stabilise steep land, prevent soil erosion and lessen the impacts of natural hazards. Community groups, rural fire brigades, research institutions, landowners and state and local government agencies work together to manage and restore these reserves, national parks and neighbouring private lands across the natural area network.

Extensive planning, implementation and monitoring underpin the City’s natural assets and land management programs to direct the finite resources of the City and its partners into priority programs and activities supported through an implementation plan.

Community engagement

A 2014 consultation process for *Gold Coast 2020* confirmed our natural assets are very important to the community, with the corporate theme ‘we live in balance with nature’ identified as the most important.

The City of Gold Coast will continue to manage our natural assets as part of its core business.

Reporting and review

There are two levels of reporting and review for the Strategy:

- an annual review of progress as part of the City’s *Annual Report*
- a review of the Strategy will commence in 2020 and be completed in 2021 to ensure consistency with the most recent and relevant information, latest scientific and response methodology and to measure performance against anticipated outcomes.

Appendix A – Key priority actions (2017 to 2021)

1. People in nature

- 1.1
- Implement key recommendations of the City's Nature-Based Recreation Plan that provide opportunities for people to connect with and appreciate nature while actively supporting nature conservation outcomes.
- Some project examples for delivery consideration over the coming years include:
- enhancing the experience of the Springbrook Mountain to Tallebudgera Valley Cream Track walk
 - Wyangan Valley multi-use track linkage
 - Schusters Park pathways
 - a track to connect Raintree Glen with Shelter Road in Coombabah Lakelands Conservation Area
 - community infrastructure including nature-based recreation trails
 - community infrastructure; directional and interpretive signage to enhance visitor experience.
- 1.2
- Implement the core activities of an Into Nature Program to:
- enjoy, explore, feel and engage residents and visitors with nature
 - build awareness and understanding of the city's unique natural assets
 - promote, support and reward nature conservation partnerships with residents, community groups, schools and research institutions, business and the development industry.
- 1.3
- Explore and support opportunities in the cultural space to promote our natural assets and their connections to our history, cultural identity and heritage, landscape character, economic prosperity and lifestyle.
- 1.4
- Pursue actions from the City's *Water Cycle Implementation Plan* to support community participation in catchment health and waterway initiatives.

2. Places for nature

- 2.1
- Investigate collaborative monitoring and reporting arrangements on the health, condition, quality and protection of our city's natural assets to inform management actions.
- 2.2
- Prioritise and implement management actions to improve health, quality, condition and level of protection for our priority natural assets.
- 2.3
- Continue to implement the City Plan's environmental policies to protect native vegetation, habitats, corridors, wetlands and waterways and where applicable, offset the loss of environmental values.
- 2.4.
- Continue to implement waterway policy to provide clear guidance for development activity along adjoining waterways.

3. Partners with nature

- 3.1
- Establish and grow existing partnerships with private landowners, volunteer groups and government programs to increase the area of land protected, restored and connected.
- 3.2
- Implement a suite of tools which are fiscally responsible to enable practical, community-focused partnerships to safeguard areas of high value for their environmental, recreational and hazard mitigation functions.
- 3.3
- Partner with government, research institutions, business and the community to undertake targeted research and conservation actions on key vulnerable wildlife species in the city.
- 3.4
- Continue to work collaboratively with stakeholders and rural landowners to coordinate bushfire, pest plant and animal management in the city's hinterland.
- 3.5
- Work with the development industry, major infrastructure providers and government to direct investments and activities in the permanent protection of important natural assets and provision of vegetation offsets arising from the *City Plan*, the *Queensland Government's Environmental Offsets Act 2014* and the *Commonwealth's Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, 1999* to help secure the city's critical wildlife corridors, core habitat areas and substantial remnants.



A male Golden-headed Cisticola (*Cisticola exilis*) declares his territory from within a dense bed of Bulrush in Coombabah Lakelands Conservation Area (Arundel section).

Photo: Todd Burrows



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