

Celebrate people and nature

Biosphere nomination for the Sunshine Coast



Meeting UNESCO Man and the Biosphere requirements

The United Nations Scientific, Education and Cultural Organisation's Man and the Biosphere (UNESCO MAB) program has three functions that biospheres must fulfil. These include conservation, development and logistical support (research and education). UNESCO MAB functions align with the Sunshine Coast's values. Ongoing potential for conservation, sustainable development, research and education in the region is strong due to the commitment of both Sunshine Coast Council and the community.

Conservation – landscapes, ecosystems, species and genetic variation:

The proposed Sunshine Coast Biosphere covers a total of 2,585 square kilometres and features protected marine and terrestrial areas, rural lifestyle and rural living, as well as urban areas where people live and work.

Across the mosaic of landscapes in the region, from mountains in the hinterland to coastal foreshores, is a large number of habitats with native plants and animals that create our rich biodiversity and highly regarded natural environment.

The natural environment in this region is a living network of landforms and catchments, wetlands, waterways, terrestrial ecosystems, coastal foreshores and marine waters. It includes the smallest lichen on Mount Coolum through to the tallest eucalypt in the hinterland, the humble brush turkey to the striking Richmond birdwing butterfly, the rarely seen water mouse to the towering Glass House Mountains and the internationally (Ramsar) recognised Pumicestone Passage.

With a subtropical climate and a long coastal strip, the Sunshine Coast is a region where two climate zones meet and overlap. Tropical habitats that extend southward are intermingled with temperate habitats extending northward to form a unique region which showcases the landforms and rich biodiversity of both climate zones and enriches the biological diversity of the region.

Becoming a biosphere will assist to recognise the special features of the region and actively support stewardship including valuing cultural diversity, mitigating climate change, adapting to climate change, enhancing resilience, protecting genetic diversity and caring for the ecosystems and species that make this an abundant biodiverse region.



Development – economic and human development which is socio-culturally and ecologically sustainable:

The Sunshine Coast is shaped by a rich Indigenous and multicultural history, resulting in multiple land uses and land users. The Traditional Owners are custodians of the land and provide local knowledge of traditional ways of using the land.

We are a community of communities that stretch from the coast to the hinterland. These diverse communities are connected and defined by their unique natural and built environments and associated geological, ecological and cultural histories.

Our region is a highly desirable place to live, work and play. The Sunshine Coast is experiencing continued growth, with a forecast annual population growth of around 8,000 people, increasing from a current population of approximately 328,030 to a forecast population of over 500,000 by 2041, with further increases expected thereafter.

As the Sunshine Coast continues to grow and emerge as a city-region, it is well positioned to foster sustainable development by proactively and deliberately responding to changes that will present both challenges and opportunities in the future.

Our food and agribusiness industry is characterised by a diverse range of sectors including poultry, seafood, horticulture, cattle, dairy and specialty dairy production. We already have a reputation for producing high-quality fresh food in a clean green environment.

Tourism is an important industry, attracting visitors from around the world, as well as day visitors from the wider region, with about eight million visitor nights per year enjoying the natural assets of the region.

The *Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme 2014* regulates land use and development across the Sunshine Coast Regional Council area (the extent of the biosphere) in a sustainable manner. It recognises the Sunshine Coast as a 'community of communities' and is tailored to keep these diverse communities unique.

The Sunshine Coast Council and community have a strong focus on sustainable outcomes. Council continue to demonstrate a commitment to fostering sustainable practices through the delivery of major projects and programs for the community, the environment and the economy.

This approach will enable the Sunshine Coast to continue toward a diverse, robust and sustainable economy. A thriving economy supports human development, which then fosters the creation of strong, resilient communities, able to protect and enhance natural assets.

Good management of population growth will ensure the natural environment is protected, including impacts on ecosystem services, and that the liveability of the region is not only maintained but also enhanced.

Logistical support – demonstration projects, environmental education and training, research and monitoring related to local, regional, national and global issues of conservation and sustainable development:

Research and education are highly valued on the Sunshine Coast. A number of research facilities, including the world class University of the Sunshine Coast, have delivered and will continue to deliver research that will help inform the operation and management of the biosphere.

Education for sustainability has been a key focus for the Sunshine Coast region. Informal education and activities provided by community groups and Council have contributed to an activated and educated community. There are now more than one hundred sustainability programs and events hosted annually by community groups, educational institutions, the Queensland Government and Sunshine Coast Council.

Schools within the region include sustainability as part of the core curriculum and students apply this knowledge to projects including improved recycling, tree planting, turtle care and studies of coastal erosion. Environmental learning for young people is supported by the Kids in Action program, hosted by the Sunshine Coast Council.

Commercial ventures such as Sea Life Mooloolaba and Australia Zoo in Beerwah also contribute to educating residents and tourists.

Environment centres within the region provide a wide range of learning opportunities, as well as citizen science projects, to engage people in conservation and understanding sustainability.

Partnerships with a wide variety of stakeholders, including academic, economic and community organisations, have been a key feature of the region in the past decade and have been facilitated and supported by the Sunshine Coast Council and the University of the Sunshine Coast in their Regional Partnership Agreement.

As part of a global network of UNESCO biospheres, the proposed Sunshine Coast Biosphere anticipates contributing to global knowledge of conservation and sustainable development, by partnering in research initiatives with other biospheres and by sharing its own knowledge and research.