

## SEQ Regional Plan review 2014

# Moreton Bay to Sunshine Coast Regional Inter-urban Break Project

## Summary Paper

### Introduction

The State government has commenced a review of the *South East Queensland Regional Plan 2009-2031 (SEQ Regional Plan)*. It is understood that the new *Regional Plan* will extend the current planning horizon to 2041.

The *SEQ Regional Plan 2009* currently protects the Moreton Bay to Sunshine Coast Regional Inter-urban Break as a valuable non-urban space separating Greater Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast.

Similarly, the Inter-urban Break in its current extent is recognised in the *Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme 2014* and the draft Moreton Bay Region Planning Scheme as a critical non-urban space separating the Sunshine Coast from the Greater Brisbane and Moreton Bay urban area which protects the environmental, landscape and recreation values of the area including the Ramsar protected Pumicestone Passage and the heritage listed Glass House Mountains.

However, as part of the *Regional Plan* review, the State government is considering two potential growth areas within the Inter-urban Break, suggesting that the future protection of the Inter-urban Break is contestable.

In response, Moreton Bay Regional Council and Sunshine Coast Council have undertaken a joint study on the values of the Inter-urban Break to confirm the importance of protecting this space in perpetuity.

### Green space planning

Planning for regional green spaces has been common practice for centuries with notable and successful examples in the United Kingdom and Canada. In Australia, examples exist in and around Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth.

These green spaces are often called the “lungs” of the adjoining city and are recognised for a range of reasons including containment of urban growth, protection of character, recreation and tourism values, environmental values and landscape values.

### SEQ Regional Plan review

The State government has made a commitment to comprehensive planning reform including the preparation of the *Queensland Plan*, changes to the planning legislation, the introduction of a *State Planning Policy* and new regional plans.

The new regional plans area intended to provide regional outcomes to achieve state interests including policies to support economic development, protect agriculture, facilitate tourism and provide for growth.

The draft SEQ Regional Plan is expected to be released for consultation in mid 2015. Preliminary consultation on the draft regional plan has indicated that it will focus on supporting economic development in the region.

The State government has released indicative population estimates for the region including the following estimates for the Moreton Bay and Sunshine Coast local government areas:

**Table 1: Population estimates 2041**

Location	Population 2011	Projected population 2041	% growth 2011-2041
Moreton Bay	390,051	663,135	70%
Sunshine Coast (Note 1)	267,000	515,000	93%
SEQ	3,139,000	5,522,000	76%

*Note 1: Sunshine Coast Council area*

Preliminary State government projections indicate that there could be a need for the following additional dwellings:

**Table 2: Dwelling estimates 2041**

LGA Projected greenfield	Projected greenfield dwellings 2011 – 2041*	Estimated existing greenfield capacity	Indicative greenfield deficit 2031 - 2041
Moreton Bay	46,358	38,617	-7,741
Sunshine Coast (Note 1)	52,231	31,526	-20,705
SEQ Total	415,641	414,035	-1,606

\*Adjusted to 40% of demand

*Note 1: Sunshine Coast Council area*

The State government is consulting with Moreton Bay and Sunshine Coast Councils on how this growth will be accommodated to 2041. It is understood that the State government is considering potential growth areas within the Inter-urban Break around the upgraded Elimbah rail station and at Halls Creek.

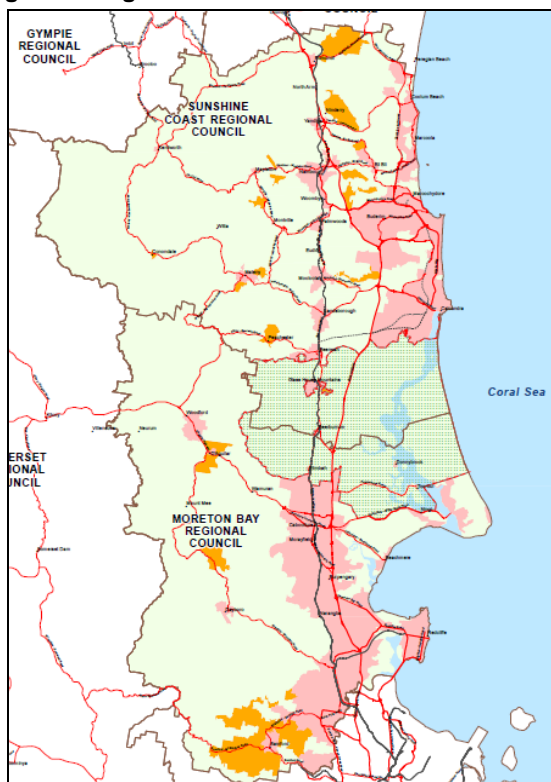
Moreton Bay and Sunshine Coast Councils are giving further consideration to these population projections and how growth may be accommodated in each area. It is noted that both councils intend to provide further information to the State government demonstrating that growth to 2041 can be accommodated in each sub-region without the need for development within the Inter-urban Break.

## Inter-urban Break

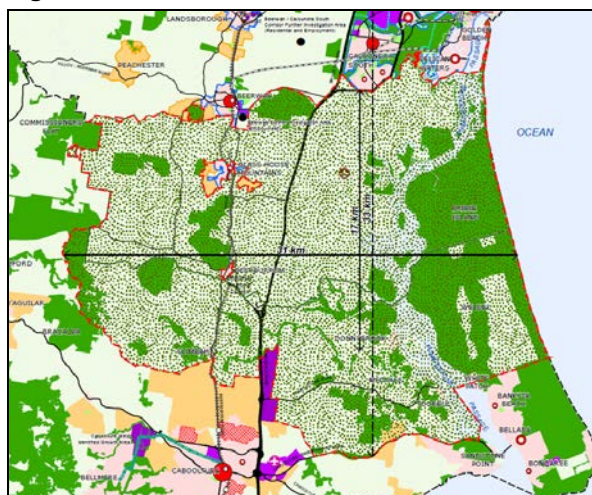
The Inter-urban Break is a 613km<sup>2</sup> non-urban area which is located in the northern part of the Moreton Bay region and southern part of the Sunshine Coast region (refer **Figure 1** below).

The Inter-urban Break is loosely aligned with the Pumicestone Passage catchment. The northern boundary of the Inter-urban break is defined by the southern boundary of Beerwah township, Roys Road and Bells Creek Road. The eastern boundary is defined by Bribie Island and the Pumicestone Passage.

**Figure 1: Regional Context**



**Figure 2: Inter-urban Break**



The southern boundary is defined by Bribie Island Road and the northern extent of the Caboolture urban area. The western boundary is generally defined by the western boundary of the Pumicestone Passage catchment (refer **Figure 2** above).

There are two significant physical features of the Inter-urban Break – the National Heritage listed Glass House Mountains and the world recognised Ramsar protected Pumicestone Passage.

Around 52.5% of the Inter-urban Break is made up of National Parks, State Forests and Forest Reserves. In particular, approximately 36% of the area is owned by the State government and is leased for forestry purposes.

The Inter-urban Break is characterised by a range of land uses including rural, forestry, rural residential, townships, tourism, community uses and extractive resources.

It is important to note that the value of the Inter-urban Break lies in the sum of its part; it is not simply the view of the pine forests as seen from the Bruce Highway. Its true value lies in the interconnectedness of all of its parts from the hinterland rural areas surrounding the Glass House Mountains to the riparian and biodiversity corridors flowing to the Pumicestone Passage.

## Recent Investigations

In response to the *SEQ Regional Plan* review, Moreton Bay Regional Council and Sunshine Coast Council have undertaken a joint study on the following key issues relating to the Inter-urban Break:

- Forestry – impacts on the forestry industry through any loss of forestry land;

- Water quality – potential impacts on the water quality of the Pumicestone Passage and its tributaries;
- Landscape values – potential loss of the iconic values provided by the Glass House Mountains and their natural settings and the Pumicestone Passage;
- Recreational values – potential impact on both the existing and possible regional recreation opportunities; and
- Economic values – impact on the existing and potential economic values of the Inter-urban Break to the SEQ region, Moreton Bay region and the Sunshine Coast.

Internal research and specialist advice was sought on these issues and the key findings are outlined below.

## Forestry

The Beerwah and Beerburrum State Forests cover approximately 30,300 hectares, of which approximately 17,100 hectares is located within the Inter-urban Break.

HQ Plantations owns the plantation forests and timber on the areas covered by the license, however the land underlying these plantations and associated native forests is State forest and in State ownership. Any alternative use of land managed by HQ Plantations Pty Ltd would require the State government to relinquish the lease arrangements in that area and compensate HQ Plantations Pty Ltd accordingly.

The Queensland Agricultural Land Audit identifies that approximately 46,000 hectares of land is used for forestry purposes in SEQ. The forestry in the Inter-urban Break accounts for 37% of the SEQ forestry area under production. 97% of production in the Inter-urban Break is for softwoods which accounts for 42% of softwood production in SEQ.

Logged timber is transported to the Caboolture sawmill and the sawlogs are supplied to a range of wood production industries. The Caboolture sawmill produces approximately 350,000 cubic metres per annum, with potential to double this output. The Caboolture sawmill accommodates 400 workers. The forestry industry also generates an indirect employment ratio of 1.3 FTE jobs for every FTE of direct employment.

The Queensland Agricultural Land Audit estimates that there are an additional 24,500 hectares identified for potential forestry in the Inter-urban Break.

## Water quality

Simmonds & Bristow Pty Ltd were commissioned to examine the surface and ground-water resource, geological and pedological (soil formation) and the location of key habitat within the Inter-urban Break.

Their report found that the Pumicestone Passage contains local, state and nationally significant wetlands and is one of the largest estuarine bays in Australia enclosed by a barrier island of vegetated sand dunes. The wetlands form part of the broader Moreton Bay. The Pumicestone Passage is the only “recreation only” fishing area in Queensland.

Water quality is currently at an important point where land use planning decisions will either lead to a continued and irreversible worsening of water quality within the Pumicestone Passage due to urbanisation, or offer opportunities to improve water quality through improved land management of existing uses.

Without appropriate land management strategies in place, the current trend of declining health will continue to lead to permanent worsening of water quality and habitat loss which would eventually lead to the loss of other values such as recreational fishing. If actions are taken to improve water quality, it may lead to the re-establishment of such values as oyster production, within the Pumicestone Passage.

Urban development at Halls Creek and other areas east of the Bruce Highway could result in extreme risks of increased turbidity and sedimentation and a decrease in dissolved oxygen levels, pH levels and seagrasses. This could result in detrimental and compounding impacts on the health of environmental areas including the Pumicestone Passage.

Best practice forestry plantation in the Inter-urban Break is recognised as a sustainable land use capable of maintaining or improving water quality in the Pumicestone Passage.



*Pumicestone Passage looking towards Caloundra*

## Recreation, tourism and landscape values

John Wood Consulting Services and MAK Planning and Design were commissioned to consider the recreation, tourism and landscape amenity values of the Inter-urban Break.

Their report determined that the SEQ resident population of 3.1 million lives within easy reach of the Inter-Urban Break and this population is expected to grow to 4.9 million by 2036. In addition, the Sunshine Coast attracts close to 9 million visitors annually.

The Sunshine Coast and Moreton Bay regions need to respond to the challenges presented by these significant population and visitor growth projections if they are to maintain their enviable lifestyle and attraction as a destination for visitors.

The Inter-urban Break is a critical component of this package because of the diversity of outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities that it provides and its contribution to scenic amenity of the region.

The Inter-Urban Break provides significant outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities at present but there is potential, with leadership from the State government and Local Councils, to further advance this position.

Specifically, the Inter-Urban Break has the potential to provide the outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities that cannot be provided in urban areas. In addition, the large spaces, remoteness from populations, and semi-natural to natural character of the Inter-urban Break may provide the setting for linear, noisy or dangerous sports that cannot be provided anywhere else close to such a large population.

Designation as an Inter-urban Break does not sterilise the land from serving other important recreation and tourism purposes, as well as community infrastructure and rural activities and land owners will continue to enjoy the lifestyle and the land use rights provided by the planning schemes.

The Inter-Urban Break however, with all its benefits, has no formal protection and is subject to on-going pressures to allow further development. Unless there is a coordinated effort to plan and manage the values and users of the Inter-urban Break, the integrity of the area will be lost and associated recreation and tourism activities will be displaced to areas further away from existing population centres.

In particular, the Inter-urban Break needs to establish its own brand/identity to encourage marketing and education about the area's values, tourism benefits and recreation opportunities.

With appropriate management, protection and leadership the Inter-urban Break has the potential to provide an oasis for SEQ, offering a wide range of outdoor recreation activities and greatly assist in growing tourism activity on the Sunshine Coast returning significant revenue to the region and to governments.

## Economic Valuation

SGS Economics and C Change Sustainable Solutions were commissioned to estimate the economic value of the Inter-urban Break in its present state. Their report determined that the economic values of the Inter-urban Break include the following:

1. **Agricultural production values** – estimated that the value of agriculture and fisheries production generated within the Inter-urban Break is more than **\$1.6 billion** including fruit crops such as berries and pineapples, livestock grazing and slaughtering, nurseries and cut flowers, forestry and seafood stocks.
2. **Tourism values** – the Inter-urban Break supports the generation of tourism yields in SEQ through the attraction of interstate and international visitors to the nature based active and passive tourism opportunities provided in the area with an estimated value of more than **\$1.1 billion**.
3. **Recreation values** – Recreation opportunities abound in the Inter-urban Break, including boating, fishing, bird watching, trail walking, horse riding, surfing and mountain bike riding, which are highly valued by SEQ residents. Participation in these recreational pursuits also generates health and well-being benefits for SEQ residents. The estimated value of the recreation values is more than **\$130 million**.
4. **Environmental values** – the Inter-urban Break contains significant areas of natural assets that provide value to both the local and wider Queensland area, including protecting the natural values of the Pumicestone Passage, in particular its water quality, protecting the natural values of the Glass House Mountains. The estimated value of the environmental values is more than **\$1.9 billion**.
5. **Rural living values** – SEQ's residential areas are characterised primarily by detached dwellings on traditional suburban blocks. The Inter-urban Break provides a unique

environment for alternative living options, particularly through its rural living opportunities in close proximity to railway townships with an estimated value of more than **\$470 million**.

- 6. **Intrinsic values** – the Inter-urban Break provides strong cultural, aesthetic, landscape and heritage values to numerous user groups, from Australia’s First Peoples to its international visitors with an estimated value of more than **\$160 million**.

The economic value of the Inter-urban Break estimated using market and non-market valuation techniques is between **\$5.47 billion** and **\$8.20 billion** as detailed in **Table 3** below.

**Table 3: Economic values**

Land Uses/ Values	Estimated Annual Value	Estimated Present Value of Total Economic Value	
Real discount rate	n.a.	6%	4%
Agricultural production	\$103 million	\$1.64 billion	\$2.49 billion
Tourism	\$62 million	\$1.16 billion	\$1.77 billion
Recreation	\$8 million	\$131 million	\$199 million
Environment	\$118 million	\$1.90 billion	\$2.87 billion
Rural living	n.a.	\$474 million	\$474 million
Intrinsic	\$16 million	\$162 million	\$398 million
Grand Total	n.a.	\$5.47 billion	\$8.20 billion

## Conclusions

In summary, recent investigations have confirmed that the Inter-urban Break provides an invaluable non-urban space for SEQ which:

- protects the estimated environmental value of the Inter-urban Break which is at least **\$1.9 billion**, including the National heritage landscape of the Glass House Mountains and the internationally recognised Ramsar protected Pumicestone Passage;
- provides unique tourism and recreation opportunities for the region, particularly ecotourism, outdoor recreation activities, boating and fishing which has an estimated value of at least **\$1.2 billion**;
- is a key defining element of the SEQ landscape, providing a sense of identity, supporting active lifestyles and building healthier communities;
- protects the diminishing agricultural areas which are valued at approximately **\$1.6 billion**, contributing to food security, economic diversity and employment for the SEQ region;

- provides an important contribution to the regional economy with a value of at least **\$5 billion**, through agricultural production, tourism, recreation, environmental protection, rural living and other intrinsic values; and
- protects the community from ongoing costs of infrastructure associated with development in this area, particularly water quality management systems.

## Key policy positions

Based on the above conclusions, Moreton Bay Regional Council and Sunshine Coast Council have identified the following key policy positions:

1. The Moreton Bay to Sunshine Coast Regional Inter-urban Break has an estimated value of at least **\$5 billion** with potential for growth;
2. The Inter-urban Break provides a valuable tourism and recreation opportunity for SEQ which could become an important part of branding for the region. As population grows, the Inter-urban Break will provide opportunities for active recreation which will contribute to healthy communities. Development within the Inter-urban Break may provide a one off benefit, however the protection of this area will provide ongoing benefits for the region;
3. The Inter-urban Break plays a key role in protecting water quality in the Pumicestone Passage. Permitting urban development in lower parts of the catchment would significantly increase the risk of worsening water quality due to high ground water levels and potential failure of infrastructure;
4. The local planning schemes provide for balanced development that is coordinated with the protection of rural, landscape and environmental values, and the efficient provision of infrastructure. Other more sustainable opportunities to accommodate regional growth are available outside the Inter-urban Break;
5. It is imperative that any decisions regarding the planning, land use and management of land within the Inter-Urban Break be based on sound scientific investigation, consideration of the impacts of development and evidence based strategic planning;
6. A coordinated joint management plan is needed to support the ongoing viability of agricultural, forestry, tourism and recreational activities whilst protecting the water quality in Pumicestone Passage and the cultural and landscape significance of the Glass House Mountains; and

7. Whilst it is intended that these provisions will provide protection for this area, it is not intended that the provisions would undermine the existing use rights of landowners within the Inter-urban Break. In fact, both councils support the continued use of this area for the range of existing uses as these activities are integral to the combined value of the Inter-urban Break. The provisions are not intended to include the Inter-urban Break in open space or parkland but rather to identify this area as an active, non-urban space. The provisions are intended to protect the Inter-urban Break from incompatible development.

## Recommendations

In accordance with these key messages, Moreton Bay Regional Council and Sunshine Coast Council recommend that the revised SEQ *Regional Plan* includes the following:

### 1. Part C: Subregional Narratives

#### *Sunshine Coast*

The Moreton Bay to Sunshine Coast Regional Inter-urban Break is protected in its current state into perpetuity as an important part of the South East Queensland landscape to:

- protect the national heritage landscape of the Glass House Mountains and the Ramsar protected Pumicestone Passage;
- preserve its natural production, forestry and recreational fishing activities as important contributors to the regional economy;
- provide a range of unique tourism opportunities to contribute to the region's natural attraction;
- provide recreation opportunities to promote active lifestyles and contribute to healthy communities; and
- preserve the distinctive character and identity of the Sunshine Coast and its many communities.

The Urban Footprint and Identified Growth Areas ensure that anticipated growth will be managed to protect the Sunshine Coast's rural and landscape areas.

#### *Moreton Bay*

The Moreton Bay to Sunshine Coast Regional Inter-urban Break is protected in its current state into perpetuity as an important part of the South East Queensland landscape to:

- protect the national heritage landscape of the Glass House Mountains and the Ramsar protected Pumicestone Passage;
- preserve its natural production, forestry and recreational fishing activities as important contributors to the regional landscape;
- provide a range of unique tourism opportunities to contribute to the region's natural attraction;
- provide recreation opportunities to promote active lifestyles and contribute to healthy communities;
- protect the riparian and biodiversity corridors that provide east west links between the Pumicestone Passage and its catchment;
- preserve the separation between the urban communities of Moreton Bay and the Sunshine Coast.

### 2. Draft Regional Policy 3.3 (Inter-urban Breaks)

- Ensure that the regionally significant Inter-urban Breaks in SEQ are identified and protected from development that adversely impacts on their functional integrity;
- A local government planning scheme is to appropriately reflect the regional outcome by:
  - Identifying regionally significant inter-urban breaks;
  - Including requirements to prevent fragmentation or development of land in the inter-urban breaks for urban purposes, rural residential or other purposes that are inconsistent with the intent of an inter-urban break; and
  - Including requirements for development in a regionally significant inter-urban break to minimise adverse impacts on the values of the inter-urban break.

### 3. Draft Regional Policy 1.1 (Urban Footprint)

- Large scale urban residential development is located within the Urban Footprint.



*Inter-urban Break and Glass House Mountains*