

Draft Queensland Protected Area Strategy

A discussion paper on building a diverse and
effective protected area system





Idalia National Park, South West Queensland
Photo: © Fiona Leyerington, Queensland Government



Minister's message

Queensland's terrestrial protected areas, including national parks and nature refuges, are world-renowned for their diversity, unique flora and fauna, and breathtaking scenery. They are the cornerstone of Queensland's nature conservation programs; protecting our state's rich biological diversity. This protection is increasingly important in the face of a changing climate.

Our protected areas contribute to conserving Indigenous and European cultural heritage; provide social and economic benefits to the wider community, including the tourism industry; and are a relaxing place to unwind from the pressures of everyday life. These are all aspects that we value for a healthy and prosperous environment and economy.

This draft Queensland Protected Area Strategy outlines the key principles that form the foundation of Queensland's management approach to, and aspirations for, its terrestrial protected areas. While the transition to a larger protected area system may mean forgoing other economic uses for some land, impacts will be managed in a way that balances conservation outcomes with the needs of our regional communities. Jobs will continue to remain a high priority.

Currently, Queensland's terrestrial protected areas cover just under 8% of the state. I am committed to expanding the protected area system to secure and conserve representative and resilient samples of all of Queensland's biogeographical regions. We will also continue to work towards the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity target of 17% terrestrial protected area coverage. We also remain committed to ensuring the sound management of Queensland's national parks. This is a critical element of the Queensland Government's vision to have a world-leading protected area system.

One of the overarching themes addressed in this draft strategy is the need to pursue innovative and cost effective approaches to grow and manage the protected area system in partnership with the community. This includes recognising and supporting the growing participation of local governments and non-government organisations, groups and individuals in managing our protected areas.

The draft strategy proposes key actions to expand and effectively manage protected areas and provides an opportunity for all Queenslanders to share their ideas and thoughts on growing and better managing our terrestrial protected area system.

I invite you to read this draft strategy and provide feedback on how Queensland can continue to grow and manage its protected areas.

Dr Steven Miles MP

**Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and
Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef**

Our vision for Queensland's protected area system

“Queensland will grow a world-leading protected area system to effectively conserve the state's unique natural assets.”

This will be achieved by:

- working towards the terrestrial protected area target set through the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity
- conserving and managing a comprehensive, adequate and representative sample of Queensland's biodiversity to secure geographically well connected protected areas that provide important ecosystem services, conserve biodiversity and that are resilient to impacts, such as the effects of climate change
- recognising and supporting the community's significant and diverse contribution to protected areas
- striving for Queensland's protected area system to meet best practice standards.

Protected areas in context

Queensland's protected areas are managed to provide key ecological, economic and social benefits to all Queenslanders. In addition, Queensland has a number of international and national obligations regarding the establishment and management of protected areas.

United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity

Australia is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (the Convention). The Convention is a legally binding global treaty that promotes the development of national strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. The parties to the Convention agree to conserve biodiversity and ecosystem services through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures.

Australian context

One of the key requirements of the Convention is that member countries implement the Convention through a national biodiversity strategy. This strategy is then considered in all planning and activities that impact on biodiversity. The Australian, state and territory governments adopted *Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010–2030* to achieve their commitments under the Convention. The strategy provides a nationally agreed approach to conserving Australia's biodiversity in the face of climate change and other threats, and identifies that Australia needs to rapidly and effectively address the threats to its biodiversity and take appropriate actions to maintain, restore and protect its ecosystems.

Additionally, the Australian, state and territory governments collaboratively deliver the National Reserve System (NRS), which aims to provide long-term protection to samples of Australia's ecosystems, and the plants and animals they support, in a national network of public, Indigenous and private protected areas.

While the NRS currently extends to just over 17% of Australia's terrestrial areas, significant work still needs to be done, including in Queensland, to ensure that the NRS contains comprehensive and adequate representation of our outstanding natural values.

Queensland context

The Queensland Government is committed to protecting and enhancing its protected areas, as well as meeting its international and national obligations.

Maintaining and protecting healthy and resilient ecosystems provides a wide range of significant benefits to Queenslanders, including improved nature conservation, climate change mitigation, improved water quality, reduced soil erosion, cleaner air, health benefits, tourism opportunities and areas for social interaction.

The draft Queensland Protected Area Strategy is being developed to give focus to government actions to update and improve protected area programs and partnerships using innovative approaches. The Queensland Government is seeking your input in developing this strategy.

Guiding principles

1. State-owned and managed national parks will continue to form the core of the protected area system, and will conserve representative and viable samples of all biogeographical regions of the state.
2. The selection and management of protected areas will be in accordance with accepted best practice standards and principles, including climate change resilience, landscape connectivity, and CAR principles (Comprehensiveness, Adequacy and Representativeness).
3. The protected area system will consist of a mosaic of protected area types to maximise biodiversity conservation through public and private participation.
4. Existing and new public protected areas will be managed to high standards of condition and function, recognising their significant contribution to conservation, climate change mitigation, tourism, health, recreation and economic outcomes for Queensland.
5. The majority of the protected area system will continue to be secured from conflicting land uses, such as resource extraction.
6. The values and management of a protected area, rather than its ownership, will determine its level of protection.
7. Respect is given to the rights, responsibilities, knowledge and aspirations of Indigenous people as custodians of their land and sea country and as skilled partners in management of the protected area system.
8. Private protected areas will be an increasingly important component of the protected area system and investment should be encouraged to recognise and support their contribution to the state's conservation objectives.
9. Partnerships will be encouraged to contribute to the establishment and effective management of protected areas.
10. Due to factors such as the likely decrease in availability of land with desirable attributes and condition over time, early effort in achieving protected area targets will be more cost effective for both acquisition and management, and will be more likely to yield high conservation benefits.
11. Local governments will be encouraged, through the availability of appropriate protective mechanisms and support, to declare significant conservation reserves as private protected areas.

Actions to deliver our vision

The draft Queensland Protected Area Strategy outlines actions the Queensland Government is already working on delivering and proposes a number of other actions aimed at growing and better managing Queensland's protected area system. These actions align with the guiding principles on page 5. The document *A Master Plan for Queensland's parks and forests to 2025* will also be reviewed to ensure consistency with the final strategy. A number of questions have been included throughout this document, to prompt your thoughts and ideas on how the Queensland Government can best realise its vision for the protected area system.

1. Expanding and better managing the protected area system

In 1908, Tamborine National Park (Witches Falls section) became Queensland's first protected area. Since that time, Queensland's land-based protected area system has grown to almost 8% of the state, and covers both public and private lands, such as national parks and nature refuges. Growing Queensland's protected area system to meet the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity 17% terrestrial area target (Convention target) will require coordinated actions across both public and private sectors. This strategy aims to identify and coordinate a range of actions that will shape the Queensland Government's approach to protected areas.

Coordinating public and private efforts in protected areas

The Queensland Government recognises the importance of engaging the community in conservation and has established the Environment Roundtable, which includes representation from major environmental stakeholder groups and associations, to provide a regular forum for discussing a range of environmental issues.

While protected area management issues are discussed at these roundtables, there is a further need for a dedicated group to coordinate strategic protected area outcomes across the public and private sectors. An informal protected area coordination group will be established to bring together the major conservation land owners, managers and investors to coordinate and cooperate on the acquisition, management and resourcing of protected areas.

The sharing of knowledge and expertise in protected area management across the public and private sectors will build a better protected area system and improve management outcomes for these areas.

ACTION UNDERWAY

- A1.** Establish an informal coordination group of major conservation land owners, managers and/or investors to facilitate coordinated protected area management and investment

Traditional Owner participation and recognition

Engaging with Traditional Owners

The Queensland Government is conscious of, and respects the rights, responsibilities, knowledge and aspirations of, Indigenous people as custodians of their land and sea country and as skilled partners in the management of the protected area system. This is reflected in the object of the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (the Act). The Act was amended in 2016 to reinstate the conservation of nature as its main purpose, while continuing to recognise the involvement of Indigenous people in the management of protected areas in which they have an interest under Aboriginal tradition or Island custom.

The participation of Indigenous and local communities is also recognised in the Convention target. Traditional Owners contribute to the management of national parks in a number of ways, including joint management of national parks on Cape York Peninsula and North Stradbroke Island, and in some circumstances through the use of voluntary agreements such as Memorandums of Understanding and Indigenous Land Use Agreements.

ACTION UNDERWAY

- A2.** Continue to innovate and build on the success of existing initiatives being implemented by government that engage Traditional Owners in protected area management

Cape York Peninsula Tenure Resolution Program

The Queensland Government is continuing to fund the Cape York Peninsula Tenure Resolution Program. This program has the dual purpose of returning both ownership and management of land on Cape York Peninsula to Aboriginal Traditional Owners. Areas of high conservation significance will be protected in jointly managed national parks (Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal Land – CYPAL) and nature refuges. The program also converts existing national parks to jointly managed national parks (CYPAL).

What is a national park (CYPAL)?

A national park (CYPAL) is a special category of protected area which is unique to the Cape York Peninsula region. The underlying tenure is Aboriginal freehold land, with the title held by an Aboriginal land trust or corporation. Following the transfer of land to an Aboriginal land trust or Aboriginal corporation, an Indigenous Management Agreement (IMA) is signed by the Queensland Government and the relevant trust/corporation. The IMA directs the area's future management as a national park (CYPAL).

Thus far the Cape York Peninsula Tenure Resolution Program has facilitated the dedication of 22 national parks (CYPAL) (covering almost 2 million hectares) and 17 nature refuges (covering approximately 560,000ha) on Cape York Peninsula. The program is working toward converting existing national parks and several resources reserves in the Cape York Peninsula region to national parks (CYPAL).

ACTION UNDERWAY

- A3.** Continue working with Traditional Owners to dedicate and manage land as national parks (CYPAL)

Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger Program

The Queensland Government's Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger (ILSR) Program contributes to the protection of Queensland's ecosystems and Indigenous cultural heritage, increases meaningful involvement of Indigenous people in land and sea country management, increases economic opportunities in ranger communities, and provides positive outcomes for employment and capacity building.

A number of Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger groups undertake joint on-ground management activities on public protected areas through collaborative agreements with the Queensland Government. The government is continuing to invest in the ILSR program, and is exploring opportunities for Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers to be involved in the conservation management of private protected areas through collaborative on-ground projects.

ACTION UNDERWAY

A4. Continue to facilitate Indigenous participation in protected area management, including through the Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger Program

Indigenous Protected Areas

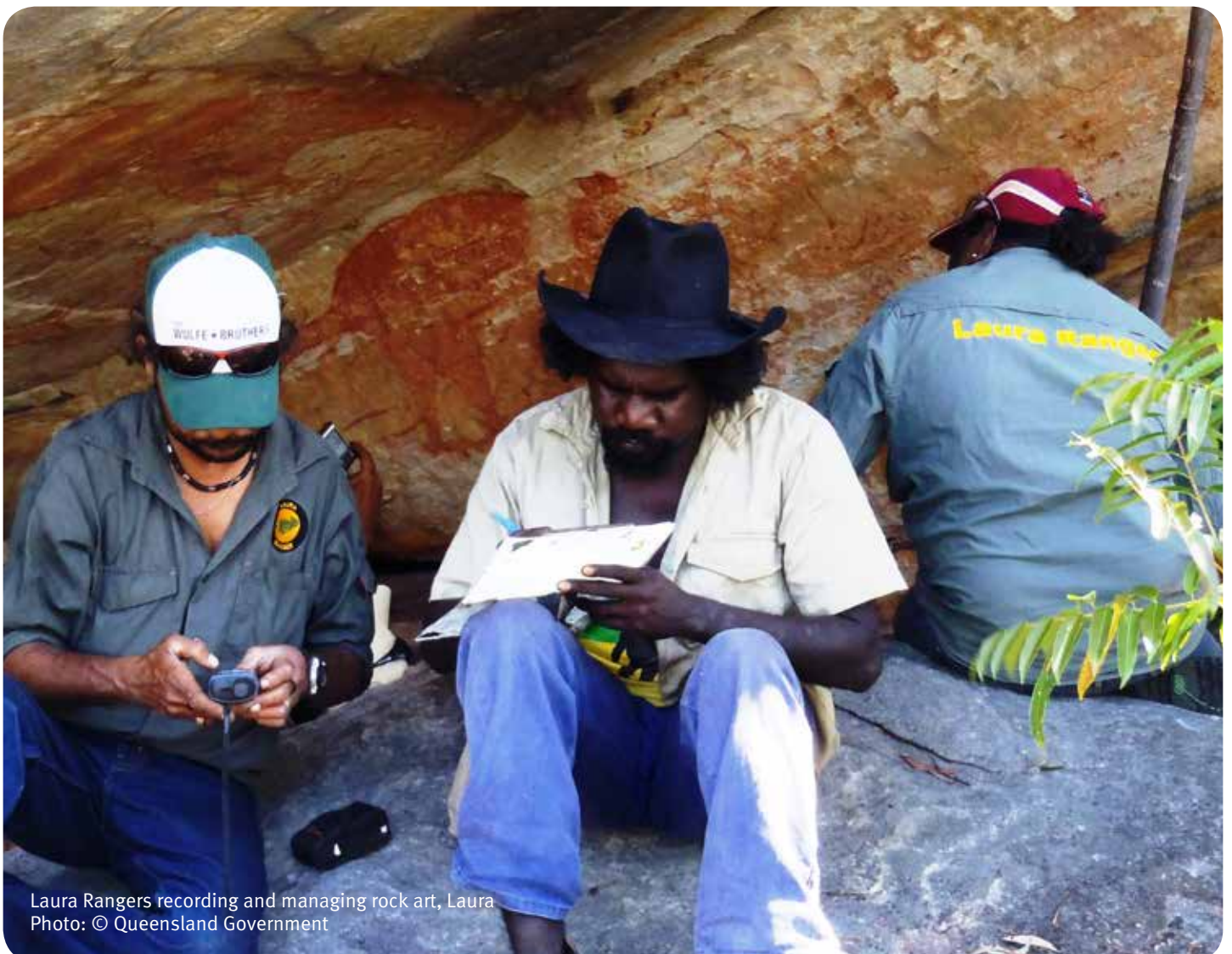
Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) are voluntary (non-statutory) agreements between the Australian Government and Traditional Owners that facilitate the conservation of biodiversity and cultural resources through the adoption of agreed management plans. IPAs also deliver health, education and economic benefits to Indigenous communities.

IPAs differ from other protected areas as they are not protected under legislation and therefore can be withdrawn by the Indigenous community without undergoing a statutory process usually associated with the revocation of protected areas.

There are currently 12 IPAs in Queensland, totalling over 4.4 million hectares. Much of this area overlaps with other types of protected areas. To date, Queensland has not included IPAs in its accounting of protected areas, which is currently limited to protected area classes under the Nature Conservation Act. However, IPAs are recognised by the Australian Government as an important part of the National Reserve System, and are included in national reporting on protected area targets under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity.

ACTION PROPOSED

A5. Recognise Indigenous Protected Areas by including them in Queensland's protected area reporting



Laura Rangers recording and managing rock art, Laura
Photo: © Queensland Government



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

- Q1.** Do you have thoughts on ways that Indigenous people, government and private landholders can work together on protected areas?
- Q2.** If you are a private protected area manager, would you be interested in exploring opportunities to work with Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers to implement conservation management activities on your protected area?
- Q3.** What are your thoughts on including Indigenous Protected Areas in Queensland's protected area reporting?

2. Private protected areas

Better protection for privately managed conservation lands

New type of private protected area

Private protected areas make an important contribution to Queensland’s protected area system, and are recognised nationally and internationally as being critical to the success of robust protected area networks. They are effective in creating landscape-scale linkages with public protected areas and contribute to a comprehensive, adequate and representative protected area system in Queensland. Private protected areas complement public protected areas and are an important part of the mosaic of protection types in Queensland.

In Queensland, nature refuges are currently the only protection type available for private landholders to secure their land in legislation and protect its biodiversity values as a protected area. Nature refuges are voluntary and perpetual and are established through the development of a binding conservation agreement between the State and the landholder. The protection afforded to nature refuges is reflected in the types of activities allowed on these areas in association with

conservation. Currently over four million hectares of Queensland are protected under nature refuges.

The Queensland Government is committed to introducing a higher level of protection for private land identified as being of outstanding natural value. A new type of voluntary private protected area is currently being considered by government, which would offer protection similar to that of a national park where the private landholder agrees to manage the land to a national park standard. The new type of voluntary private protected area, which will be called a “Special Wildlife Reserve”, would fit within the existing protected area framework (see Table 1).

The Queensland Government recognises that conservation is a valid and desired use of leasehold land. The government will ensure that where a protected area declaration is made over leasehold land, conservation is recognised as being consistent with the purpose of the lease and any conditions placed upon the lease. This will provide certainty to landholders of protected areas that management decisions that deliver conservation outcomes will be consistent with the primary lease purpose.

Table 1. Level of protection across public and private protected areas

| | High-level protection | Moderate-level protection |
|-------------------|--|--|
| Public ownership | <p>National park</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restricted management and protected from other land uses Perpetual – in accordance with the Nature Conservation Act | <p>Conservation park or Resources reserve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> May have a broader range of uses, including resource extraction Perpetual – in accordance with the Nature Conservation Act |
| Private ownership | <p>Proposed “Special Wildlife Reserve”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restricted management and protected from other land uses Perpetual – in accordance with the Nature Conservation Act | <p>Nature refuge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed sustainable land uses, including grazing and forestry Resource extraction Perpetual – in accordance with the Nature Conservation Act |

ACTIONS UNDERWAY

- A6.** Protect private lands of outstanding conservation value from incompatible land uses by creating a new class of privately managed protected area (Special Wildlife Reserve) under the Nature Conservation Act
- A7.** Recognise conservation as a consistent lease purpose on leasehold land where a protected area has been declared

Improving conservation outcomes on private protected areas

A broad range of actions, such as landholder engagement, monitoring, reporting and compliance, are necessary to maintain and improve conservation values on, and the integrity of, private protected areas. The Queensland Government has developed, and wants to further develop, through this consultation process, a range of strategies to engage with private protected area landholders. The government wants to support on-ground activities that encourage positive environmental and conservation outcomes.

Government and private protected area landholders have an expectation that their legacy will be upheld by third parties and future owners of the private protected area, honouring the conditions in the conservation agreement.

In the rare instances where formal compliance action is required, prosecution through the court system is currently the only option available. This is often a very expensive option, and can be too severe for the significance of some situations.

There is the need for a broader range of tools to be available so that lower level breaches can be dealt with more appropriately and potentially damaging actions can be discouraged. This will provide the best opportunity for the ongoing conservation and protection of privately managed conservation lands.

ACTION PROPOSED

- A8.** Broaden the range of regulatory tools available under the Nature Conservation Act to better protect privately managed conservation lands



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

- Q4.** In what ways should government engage and collaborate with landholders to ensure that the desired outcomes are achieved on private protected areas?
- Q5.** What are your views on improving the Queensland Government's ability to deal with breaches of conservation agreements on private protected areas, by the introduction of lower level compliance options?

**Nature
refuge**

Ethabuka

This is a protected area under the
Nature Conservation Act 1992.
Access is only by permission of
the land-holder.



Ethabuka Nature Refuge, Channel Country
Photo: © Queensland Government

Greater private participation in protected areas

Since 2005, the Queensland Government program, NatureAssist, has been the primary grants-based incentives scheme for the Nature Refuges Program and has played an important role in increasing the size and quality of the protected area system. To date, incentives have been directed to recruiting new nature refuges or extensions to existing nature refuges; not to their ongoing management.

While the NatureAssist program is highly efficient at recruiting nature refuges, the current range of incentives could be expanded to attract greater participation from private landholders in protected areas and to better support those already managing their land for conservation outcomes.

The current support offered to nature refuge landholders, in the form of periodic contact and visits by Nature Refuges Program staff, is not considered adequate by many nature refuge landholders. A greater level of assistance, either monetary or in another form, would assist landholders with the ongoing management of their nature refuges. This assistance would also act as an incentive for other landholders to participate in private protected areas.

Offering or facilitating access to alternative income streams may also encourage landholders to refrain from adverse management decisions. Alternative income streams could be realised via, for example, environmental stewardship programs (which recognise the public benefits from sustainable land management); carbon abatement programs; or biodiversity offsets schemes.

The Queensland Government is proposing to explore options for reducing government taxes and charges and other disincentives for private landholders to participate in conservation.

ACTIONS PROPOSED

- A9.** Consider alternative and innovative ways to deliver the NatureAssist incentives scheme to encourage the establishment, and assist in the ongoing management, of private protected areas
- A10.** Explore and facilitate uptake of alternative income streams such as carbon schemes, stewardship approaches and offsets schemes on private protected areas
- A11.** Investigate options to reduce government charges and other disincentives for private protected area owners

Local government contributions to conservation

Many local government authorities (LGAs) in Queensland own and manage areas of high conservation value. The Queensland Government would like to work more closely with local government to ensure appropriate land is protected under the Nature Conservation Act and included in the National Reserve System.

Several LGAs are interested in formally delivering protected area outcomes on private land utilising nature refuges. The Queensland Government has trialled a co-delivery model for nature refuges with some LGAs. This model has the capacity to be expanded to other local government areas. Consideration could also be given to ways in which LGAs could be given the capacity to more directly deliver nature refuges. This could be a potentially cheaper and more effective alternative to Land Act covenants that are commonly used to deliver local Voluntary Conservation Agreement programs.

As part of the strategy development, targeted consultation will take place with the Local Government Association of Queensland and interested LGAs to discuss mutually beneficial private protected area opportunities.

ACTION PROPOSED

- A12.** Explore options with local government for protecting their significant conservation reserves in Queensland's protected area system

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

- Q6.** Can you suggest what additional support would assist landholders to meet their operational and maintenance costs of nature refuges?
- Q7.** What incentives would encourage you to become a nature refuge landholder (if your property had the appropriate conservation values)?
- Q8.** Are there any factors that you think discourage uptake of private protected areas?



3. State-owned and managed protected areas

Queensland's State-owned and managed protected areas (parks estate) are protected, enjoyed, cherished and valued now and into the future, enhancing Queenslanders' wellbeing and prosperity

Queensland is home to over 270 national parks and over 220 conservation parks, including five World Heritage Areas. The Queensland Government, through the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS), is the manager of this parks estate that includes over 9.5 million hectares of protected areas.

This network of State-owned and managed protected areas is the foundation of Queensland's rich biodiversity and unique natural environment. The benefits of the parks estate are far broader than just environmental. The parks estate presents diverse opportunities for tourism and outdoor recreation that are vital to the Queensland economy. It is a major drawcard attracting visitors to regional Queensland and supporting local communities and businesses. In addition, the parks estate provides places for people to connect with nature and each other, delivering not only social benefits but health and wellbeing benefits. The parks estate also indirectly contributes to other sectors of the economy through its ecosystem services, including pollination services for agriculture, water filtration for catchments, nurseries for breeding fish and heat regulation in increasingly urban environments. It also plays a vital defensive role for coastal communities, with reefs, mangroves and coastal dunes providing natural protection measures in extreme weather events. It is imperative that the parks estate continues to be managed in a way that recognises both its values and benefits.

While QPWS is the manager of the parks estate, and this management is guided by legislative requirements and a Master Plan, the environmental stewardship of the estate is the responsibility of the whole community and there are many partners who contribute to this effort. Recreation providers, tourism operators, Traditional Owners, and conservation and other community groups work closely with QPWS in delivering conservation, management and recreational outcomes. In addition, there are currently over 800 volunteers who provide a valuable contribution to presentation, conservation and management activities.

A well-managed parks estate requires ongoing investment to ensure its values are maintained and opportunities for safe and sustainable use are available. Significant cost is attached to the management and use of the parks estate. A contemporary approach that recognises its broader value to the Queensland economy is also increasingly important.

The Queensland Government will explore innovative strategies and opportunities that would assist in the effective management of national parks, informed by socio-economic research.

Tourism and recreation is the primary human use of the parks estate. The most recent QPWS Newspoll Community Survey (2012) estimated the parks estate (terrestrial and marine) hosted in excess of 51 million domestic visits and 7.8 million international visits per year. While entry fees to national parks are common internationally, entry fees to Queensland's parks estate are not currently charged. However, visitors

make a contribution to the cost of managing these areas in Queensland through fees associated with camping and vehicle permits (this does not include fees paid by tourism operators). In 2014–15, the Queensland Government recovered only 18% of visitor-related costs through camping and vehicle fees.

The camping fees in the Queensland parks estate are currently the lowest in Australia for overnight stays in popular campgrounds during peak season. Other jurisdictions adopt different fee levels and fee types for visitor use, often reflective of the type of visitor experience, popularity and cost to service. For example, in Canada, the United States of America and South Africa, visitors are required to purchase passes to particular protected areas. The 'Parks Pass' approach is also common in other states of Australia.

As Queensland's parks estate grows, additional revenue will be required into the future to effectively manage parks in line with community expectations.

Options for future management and enjoyment

Options for improving park management and promoting connections between people and parks that could be explored include:

- identifying new opportunities for partnerships and cooperative arrangements that contribute to park management and seeking to further engage the community in volunteering and other opportunities
- camping fees that better reflect the cost to service areas, by using seasonality and/or popularity of park sites to provide improved management of very popular sites
- the use of entry fees or a 'Parks Pass' for the most popular parks to contribute to maintaining and upgrading visitor facilities and conserving the natural and cultural values of these areas
- introducing systems to enable people to voluntarily contribute to park management, for example, through donations, an opt-in levy, or an endowment fund (as is common in the United States of America)
- promoting/incorporating the use of technologies such as smart devices to encourage participation in on-park and off-park conservation and park presentation programs.

ACTIONS PROPOSED

- A13.** Review revenue and funding mechanisms to reflect the value of the benefits provided by the parks estate with the aim of ensuring consistency within the existing fee structure and with other states, and promoting a more equitable and transparent system
- A14.** Explore alternative options to encourage partnerships, volunteering, sponsorship and promotional activities that contribute to park management
- A15.** Undertake socio-economic analysis to identify potential economic and social benefits associated with the parks estate to help inform investment decisions and partnership opportunities



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

- Q9.** Are there other avenues to maintain the current and expanded parks estate?
- Q10.** Do you support user fees where the fees would contribute to management costs?
- Q11.** Should Queensland consider a more contemporary approach to visitor use-related fees, similar to other states, to provide an improved contribution to park management?
- Q12.** Are you supportive of any of the strategies the Queensland Government is proposing to explore in relation to providing partnership arrangements and additional revenue to assist with managing national parks across Queensland (see Options for future management and enjoyment on page 14)?
- If so, please provide comment on any of these strategies.
 - Can you suggest any other strategies that should also be explored?
- Q13.** How would you encourage partnerships, volunteers, sponsorship and other promotional activities associated with national parks?



Managing for park values

A healthy protected area system will need a variety of protected area types to cater for the demands placed on it, not only for conservation but also for the diversity of outdoor recreation and other needs. This is especially the case where there is a high demand for recreational purposes in areas where few alternative protected area types exist nearby — parks near urban areas, in particular, will increasingly feel this pressure.

QPWS has established a framework to guide the allocation of funds and resources for managing the parks estate, taking into consideration park values and management requirements. This approach ensures management effort is aligned with identified priorities, providing a consistent, transparent and cost effective approach to funding park management.

ACTION UNDERWAY

A16. QPWS aims to balance and promote responsible community use of protected areas while ensuring similar opportunities are available for future generations to enjoy. We will do this using contemporary and adaptive management tools and by continuing our funding commitment to best practice park management

More flexible management tools

There is an increasing trend internationally for government agencies involved in managing national parks to collaborate with third parties to deliver more effective park management.

Currently there is no specific legislative mechanism to directly authorise a third party to contribute, where appropriate, to the management of national parks in Queensland. The Queensland Government is investigating legislative amendments, under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, to develop a legislative mechanism; for example, a conservation authority that would provide for this, supported by a robust regulatory and policy framework.

Suitable third parties could include incorporated organisations, local governments or individuals, with a proven track record in delivering conservation outcomes and the capacity to address matters such as workplace liability and health and safety issues.

ACTION PROPOSED

A17. Develop a legislative mechanism under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* to allow for sole or partnership management of national parks by third parties, such as conservation groups and Traditional Owners

Promote philanthropic investment

Internationally, and interstate, park management agencies have implemented systems for philanthropic investment in national parks and encouraged corporate sponsorship. The Queensland Government proposes to investigate similar opportunities for attracting additional investment in the parks estate in Queensland.

ACTION PROPOSED

A18. Prepare a prospectus to encourage international and domestic philanthropic investment in the parks estate



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

- Q14. How would you accommodate a mix of activities on the parks estate while preserving the area's natural condition and protecting the area's cultural resources and values?
- Q15. Would you support a legislative mechanism that provides for certain third parties to manage activities that occur on national parks (e.g. habitat restoration)?
- Q16. What criteria would you apply to these third parties to ensure the best outcome for national parks?
- Q17. What management activities do you consider suitable for a third party to undertake?
- Q18. Would you support opportunities for corporate and/or philanthropic investment in Queensland's national parks?



4. Shaping the future of Queensland's protected area system

Public protected areas such as national parks and conservation parks currently form 70% of Queensland's protected area system, with privately-owned nature refuges making up the remaining 30% of protected areas. Incentive schemes, such as the Queensland Government-funded NatureAssist program, have generated increased participation in protected areas by the private sector, with nature refuges comprising the majority of the increase in the protected area system over the last 10 years.

The Queensland Government's long-term target to grow the protected area system in line with the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity target, is ambitious and will be challenging to achieve. The setting of a medium-term target, to achieve a comprehensive, adequate, representative and climate resilient protected area system, would assist in focussing efforts over a set period of time. This would allow for a more strategic approach to investment in conservation opportunities.

There are several factors that need to be considered when applying a medium-term target to growing Queensland's protected area system. The ratio of public to private protected areas will need to be considered, as will the relative State funding required to grow both the private and public components of the protected area system. The government will also need to decide what proportion of the overall protected area budget to allocate to the proposed Special Wildlife Reserve type of private protected area, compared with nature refuges and public protected areas.

The various protected area types, including the proposed Special Wildlife Reserve, have differing costs and suitability for implementation, differing levels of protection and use, and differing degrees of public benefit, particularly relating to public access.

All of these factors need to be considered when thinking about the desired make-up of the protected area system.

ACTION PROPOSED

A19. Develop a medium-term target for working towards a 17% terrestrial protected area coverage, including relative contributions of private and public areas

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Q19. The current ratio of public protected area coverage to private protected area coverage in the state is 70:30. Do you think this is appropriate? If not, what sort of ratio should we have, and why?



Brolgas, North Queensland
Photo: © Queensland Government

Have your say

Send your written submission to
protectedarea.strategy@ehp.qld.gov.au or

Protected Area Strategy
Department of Environment and Heritage Protection
GPO Box 2454
Brisbane QLD 4001

or provide your submission online via the
Queensland Government's Get Involved website
www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au

**Submissions close
24 February 2017**

What happens next?

Following the close of the consultation period, the Queensland Government will consider all submissions received and finalise the Strategy accordingly. Final recommendations from the Strategy will be costed and considered by the government for release and implementation in 2017.

www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au