

Draft

City of Ipswich

Natural Environment Policy

Discussion Paper



CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	3
CURRENT STRATEGIES AND COMMITMENTS	3
STRATEGIC DRIVERS	4
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT IN OTHER COUNCILS	5
AUSTRALIA'S STRATEGY FOR NATURE 2019-2030	6
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS	11
CONSULTATION	12
DRAFT NATURAL ENVIRONMENT POLICY STATEMENT AND PRINCIPLES	21
SUMMARY	23
HAVE YOUR SAY	23



INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Council is developing a new policy detailing its strategic position with respect to its direction and functions in terms of the natural environment. The purpose of the policy is to reinforce council's commitment to the natural environment by setting out principles to support good long term and balanced decision making that takes into consideration natural values, economic viability and social wellbeing.

The policy will have a focus on council's social and corporate responsibilities as well as partnerships with the community. It also links with the recently adopted Sustainability Policy.

To inform policy development, the Natural Environment and Land Management team has undertaken community consultation; engagement with high valued stakeholder sector representatives; and internal collaboration with council employees and elected representatives. This paper includes insight into trends on what natural environment elements are important to stakeholders and, within council's responsibilities, how to address them.

The paper also provides further information about the values and elements that make up the draft policy including reference to council strategies and commitments, a comparison of other councils in South East Queensland and review of national environmental goals.

The intent of this paper is to recommend for consideration council's policy direction for managing the values of the natural environment.

Natural Environment – for the purpose of the policy, the natural environment is a collective term used to describe the diverse terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems that make up the city's habitat network. It includes natural values such as cultural landscape features.

Natural Values – with reference to the policy, natural values are special qualities such as uniqueness, rarity, typicality, representivity, scientific or education importance, have useful features or recreation value.

Includes:

- habitat for iconic, significant and threatened species
- core habitat areas as home for a diverse range of wildlife
- nodes of remnant vegetation in urban areas providing wildlife refuge
- strategic remnants vegetation patches as stepping stones for wildlife movement
- corridors providing connectivity for wildlife, recreation and active transport
- increasing vegetation condition and animal abundance within core habitat areas
- biological diversity, natural capital and ecosystem services
- waterways, wetlands, riparian and aquatic ecosystems and floodplains
- improving health of waterways
- Aboriginal cultural heritage and cultural landscape features
- scenic amenity.

CURRENT STRATEGIES AND COMMITMENTS

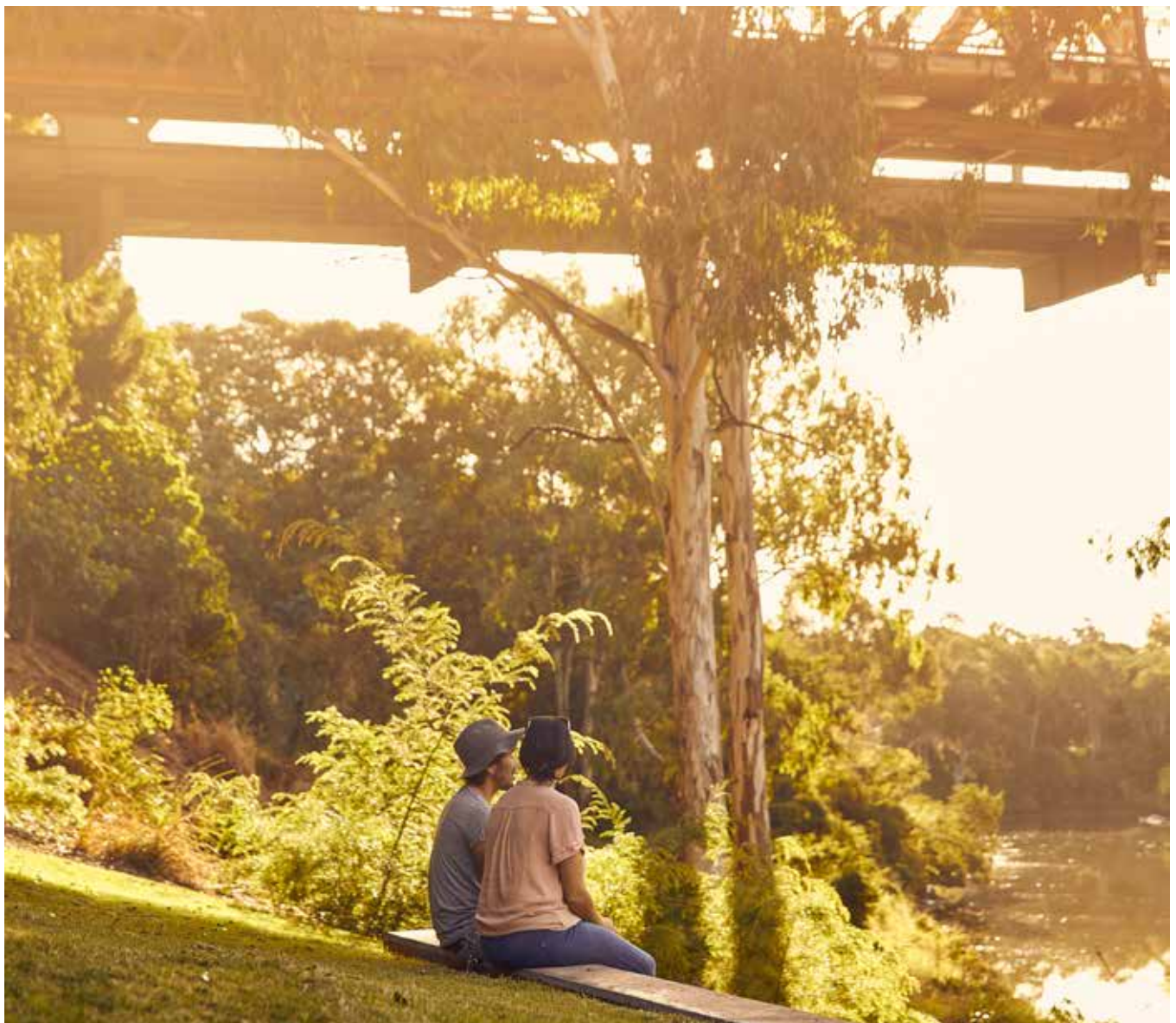
Council's two key citywide strategies with natural environment links are the Ipswich Nature Conservation Strategy (2015) and the recently updated Waterway Health Strategy (2020). Although council has strived to implement the actions focused on the intent of both strategies it has sometimes been faced with challenges with balancing decision making and prioritising investment.

The intent of the 'new' policy is to provide good governance across council and ensure consistent decision making reflects best practice and stakeholder sentiment.

The current Ipswich Nature Conservation Strategy is due for review and therefore timely to have a community aligned council policy for the natural environment to inform the review – setting the foundation.

Council is committed to undertaking a review into its management of urban greening from a perspective of biodiversity contribution, liveability and community participation. It is opportune to be developing a natural environment policy that can inform any future review.

Planning schemes can guide appropriate outcomes for the use and development of land. Schemes and the strategic planning process are one of the most effective mechanisms to protect and conserve the natural environment. Council's current scheme has sought sustainable citywide solutions that balances social, economic and environmental outcomes. The current scheme is under review and as such, timing is fitting to be setting out council's natural environment commitments so as to ensure alignment.



STRATEGIC DRIVERS

CORPORATE PLAN 2021-2026 DEVELOPMENT (IFUTURE)

Council is developing a 20 year vision for Ipswich which includes a five year corporate plan. A clean natural environment and open spaces is one of the key strategic themes. Council is consulting with the community on the theme and initial indications suggest that there is extensive input and feedback in this area. A Natural Environment Policy would set out the strategic position and framework to support the plan's strategic theme and contribute towards achieving the corporate vision for the city.

COUNCIL POLICY REVIEW - BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION PROJECT #9

In 2019 council implemented a Business Transformation Program (TP) comprising 18 projects to ensure it provided an enhanced service to the community and make the organisation a better place to work. Project #9 involved a review and update of policies, procedures and local laws. The project identified a gap in policy for the natural environment.

An Enviroplan Program and Levy Policy was developed and endorsed as part of that review. The policy sets out commitments for council's investment of the levy in initiatives that protect and enhance the natural environment. When developing the policy a need was highlighted for a position to guide the management of broader natural environment matters (i.e. land-use impacts, landscape and city scale direction and objectives) outside of that associated or funded by the levy alone.

Council also endorsed a strategic framework for sport, recreation, physical activity, active travel and outdoor/nature-based recreation in its Active City Policy. The natural environment is interrelated with creating an active city. A policy addressing this relationship and recreation sustainability in natural areas was identified as critically important.

SUSTAINABILITY POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Council recently endorsed a Sustainability Policy committing council to balancing the protection of the environment as well as encompassing environmental, social and economic considerations from the perspective of creating a sustainable city. The natural environment is one of the key considerations that underpin the Sustainability Policy and associated strategic framework through the delivery of critical ecosystem services for example. A policy specifically focused on natural environment elements will support achieving sustainability outcomes.

NEW PLANNING SCHEME DEVELOPMENT

Commencing in 2019, council is in the process of developing a new Planning Scheme. Community submissions received as part of consultation on the scheme's strategic framework included extensive reference to the natural environment, strategic greenspace and links, biodiversity, watercourses and designated wetlands. It is both timely and central for the review that council set out its strategic position for these matters.

'LIVING IN IPSWICH 2020' PILOT PROJECT AND SURVEY RESULTS

Survey results from residents collected as part of this pilot project identified access to the natural environment as the third most important liveability attribute for the city. The results indicate that to advance liveability, council needs to implement appropriate and sustainable planning, development, management, maintenance and activation of natural environment. A policy that takes into consideration sustainable access to the natural environment will contribute to addressing this important community aspect.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT IN OTHER COUNCILS

The Natural Environment and Land Management team has analysed and reviewed governance documents of other SEQ councils to identify where natural environment management commitments exist and how they are addressed. Of 11 council's reviewed, two councils – Brisbane and Redlands had a specific natural environment policy. Remaining councils did not have a natural environment policy, however had strategies that specifically addressed the natural environment or similar policies that partly addressed it – refer table 1.

Besides at a policy and strategy level, many SEQ councils have environmental commitments in their planning scheme strategic frameworks/plans. Following are examples of councils with scheme policies relating to the environment:

- Brisbane City Council – biodiversity areas
- Logan City Council – environmental management
- Moreton Bay Regional Council – environmental areas and corridors
- Redlands City Council – environmental significance
- Sunshine Coast Regional Council – biodiversity, waterways and wetlands.

South East Queensland Councils	Natural Environment Policy (Y/N)	Other	Web link
Brisbane City Council	Y	-	Brisbane.qld.gov.au/about-council/governance-and-strategy/vision-and-strategy/environmental-policy
Redlands City Council	Y	-	Redland.qld.gov.au/download/downloads/id/3612/env-001-p_natural_environment_policy.pdf
Gold Coast City Council	N	Our Natural City Strategy	https://www.goldcoast.qld.gov.au/our-natural-city-strategy-40717.html
Lockyer Valley Regional Council	N	Natural Resource Management Strategy	Lockyervalley.qld.gov.au/our-services/environment-and-pest-management/Documents/Final_LVRC_NRM_Strategy_2020_2030_web_1579750124.pdf
Logan City Council	N	Sustainability Policy	Logan.qld.gov.au/downloads/file/1965/sustainability-policy
Moreton Bay Regional Council	N	Sustainability Policy	Moretonbay.qld.gov.au/files/assets/public/services/policies/sustainability-policy.pdf
Noosa Council	N	Environment and Sustainable Living Policy	Noosa.qld.gov.au/downloads/file/1081/environment-and-sustainable-living-policy
Scenic Rim Regional Council	N	Scenic Rim Biodiversity Strategy	Scenicrim.qld.gov.au/our-environment/biodiversity
Somerset Regional Council	N	Esk Shire Natural Resource Management Plan	Somerset.qld.gov.au/downloads/file/471/esk-shire-natural-resource-management-plan-nrmp-pdf
Sunshine Coast Regional Council	N	Environment and Liveability Strategy	Els.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/About-the-strategy
Toowoomba Regional Council	N	Green Infrastructure Strategy	Tr.qld.gov.au/about-council/council-governance/plans-strategy-reports/various-documents/12539-green-infrastructure-strategy

Table 1: Natural Environment in other SEQ council's.

AUSTRALIA'S STRATEGY FOR NATURE 2019-2030

In 2019 the Commonwealth Government published Australia's Strategy for Nature - [Australiasnaturehub.gov.au/national-strategy](https://www.australiasnaturehub.gov.au/national-strategy). The strategy is the overarching framework for all national, state and territory and local strategies, legislation, policies and actions that target nature. The Australian Local Government Association was involved in development of the strategy, along with representatives of the Australian, state and territory governments.

The strategy is a shared roadmap to better understand, care for and sustainably manage nature. It seeks to coordinate national delivery of Australia's commitments to national and international conventions and targets such as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The strategy comprises three priority goals which are supported by 12 objectives and associated measures of progress. The Commonwealth Government mapped each goal against SDGs, demonstrating the contribution they make.


Recognising the local scale contribution council can make to national environmental outcomes as part of policy development, the national strategy's goals, objectives and targets were mapped for alignment against council's policy and its seven policy focus areas being:


1. Biodiversity and Threatened Species Recovery
2. Wetlands and Waterways Improvement
3. Urban Biodiversity Enhancement
4. Natural Area Restoration and Protection
5. Experiencing Nature
6. Community Awareness and Support
7. Governance, Measuring and Reporting


A national strategic framework also provides council an opportunity to validate its policy commitments against and confirm clear policy alignment. Mapping the policy against the strategy assists council in demonstrating a commitment to 'working together' and 'act locally, think globally' e.g. alignment from local policy to national objective to international goals.

Table 2 sets out where council's policy contributes to achieving strategic national goals and objectives.



Australia's Strategy for Nature Goals	#	Objectives	#	Progress Measures	Council Policy Focus Area Alignment
 <p>GOAL 1: CONNECT ALL AUSTRALIANS WITH NATURE</p>	1	Encourage Australians to get out into nature	1A	Promotion of human health benefits from nature-based activities	5. Experiencing Nature
			1B	Visitation rates to public nature conservation areas (land and sea)	
			1C	Value and diversity of nature-based tourism	
	2	Empower Australians to be active stewards of nature	2A	Number and diversity of volunteers for nature-based activities	4. Natural Area Restoration and Protection 6. Community Awareness and Support
			2B	Number of people contributing information through citizen science programs	
			2C	Number and extent of lands managed for conservation under other effective conservation measures (privately managed protected areas, covenants or stewardship agreements)	
			2D	Number and scope of public-private partnerships and cross-sector collaborations to look after nature	
	3	Increase Australians' understanding of the value of nature	3A	Activities to increase awareness of the importance of nature, including to human health and wellbeing	6. Community Awareness and Support 7. Governance, Measuring and Reporting
			3B	Quantification of natural capital and its benefits, such as through environmental-economic accounts	
	4	Respect and maintain traditional ecological knowledge and stewardship of nature	4A	Work with Indigenous communities to support the protection, documentation and retention of Indigenous ecological knowledge	4. Natural Area Restoration and Protection 6. Community Awareness and Support
			4B	Recognition and use of Indigenous ecological knowledge in interpretation, practices and decisions relating to environmental management	
			4C	Indigenous rangers and Indigenous ranger programs managing land and seascapes	
			4D	Number and extent of terrestrial and marine areas managed by Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) or other co-management arrangements	

Australia's Strategy for Nature Goals	#	Objectives	#	Progress Measures	Council Policy Focus Area Alignment
 <p>GOAL 2: CARE FOR NATURE IN ALL ITS DIVERSITY</p>	5	Improve conservation management of Australia's landscapes, waterways, wetlands and seascapes	5A	Extent and representativeness of government-managed reserve estate and, where available, their condition	4. Natural Area Restoration and Protection 6. Community Awareness and Support 7. Governance, Measuring and Reporting
			5B	Extent and representativeness of marine protected areas, including marine Indigenous protected areas	
			5C	Number and extent of significant ecosystems protected by private landowners through stewardship or other arrangements	
			5D	Explicit consideration of future climate scenarios in the planning and management of protected area networks	
			5E	Retention, protection and/or restoration of wetland systems to maintain or improve ecological integrity and ecosystem function	
	6	Maximise the number of species secured in nature	6A	Consistent, robust and transparent assessment and listing of threatened species applied across all jurisdictions	1. Biodiversity and Threatened Species Recovery 2. Wetlands and Waterways Improvement 3. Urban Biodiversity Enhancement 4. Natural Area Restoration and Protection 6. Community Awareness and Support
			6B	Number of populations of threatened or near-threatened species protected in government-managed reserves	
			6C	Number of populations of threatened or near-threatened species protected by private landowners through stewardship or other arrangements	
			6D	Number and success of strategic ex-situ conservation programs and emergency interventions implemented for the most at-risk species	
			6E	Number and area of 'safe havens' for threatened species (e.g. threat-free islands, predator-free enclosures)	

Australia's Strategy for Nature Goals	#	Objectives	#	Progress Measures	Council Policy Focus Area Alignment
 <p>GOAL 2: CARE FOR NATURE IN ALL ITS DIVERSITY</p>	7	Reduce threats and risks to nature and build resilience	7A	Explicit consideration of climate change adaptation and resilience, including in the management of species and ecosystems that are vulnerable to climate change	1. Biodiversity and Threatened Species Recovery 2. Wetlands and Waterways Improvement 3. Urban Biodiversity Enhancement 4. Natural Area Restoration and Protection
			7B	Extent and success of management programs to implement appropriate fire regimes that reduce impacts of fire on species and/or ecosystems that are vulnerable to this threat	
			7C	Extent and success of management programs for established invasive species that pose a significant threat to species and/or ecosystems that are vulnerable to this threat	
			7D	Extent and success of management programs to minimise incursion and spread of new and emerging invasive species	
			7E	Retention, protection and/or restoration of landscape-scale, native vegetation corridors	
			7F	Retention, protection and/or restoration of native vegetation in urban, peri-urban and agricultural contexts	
	8	Use and develop natural resources in an ecologically sustainable way	8D	Explicit consideration of measures of natural capital in the sustainable development of Australia's natural resources	1. Biodiversity and Threatened Species Recovery 6. Community Awareness and Support 7. Governance, Measuring and Reporting
			9A	Number and extent of urban greening initiatives	3. Urban Biodiversity Enhancement
			9B	Inclusion of ecologically diverse green spaces in the design and development of urban areas	
	9	Enrich cities and towns with nature	9C	Promotion of urban nature-based initiatives	


Australia's Strategy for Nature Goals <div>  </div>	GOAL 3: SHARE AND BUILD KNOWLEDGE	#	Objectives	#	Progress Measures	Council Policy Focus Area Alignment
		10	Increase knowledge about nature to make better decisions	10A	Explicit science and knowledge programs to support effective management of biodiversity	1. Biodiversity and Threatened Species Recovery 7. Governance, Measuring and Reporting
				10B	Understanding of the likely impacts of climate change on, and effective methods to promote adaptation and resilience of, terrestrial, aquatic and marine systems and species	
				10C	Systems capturing data on the diversity of Australian nature and how ecosystems function	
		11	Share and use information effectively	11A	Public accessibility to information on Australia's nature, through a variety of platforms	6. Community Awareness and Support 7. Governance, Measuring and Reporting
				11B	Citizen science programs providing robust data on Australia's nature to public information sets	
				11C	Collaboration and coordination between jurisdictions and research agencies in the collection, collation and publication of data about Australia's nature	
		12	Measure collective efforts to demonstrate our progress	12A	Development of options for using measures of natural capital and ecosystem services in monitoring and reporting systems	
				12B	Number of organisations and businesses reporting their performance against environmental measures	
				12C	Document biodiversity-related intervention and investment, and measure and report on outcomes	

Table 2: Where policy contributes to national environmental goals.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Endorsed by the Commonwealth Government in 2015, the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides a global blueprint to systematically improve quality of life through its social, environmental and economic determinants. The agenda includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - [Sdgs.un.org/goals](https://sdgs.un.org/goals).

Some local governments have built the SDGs into their policies, strategies and/or local initiatives such as Logan and Mackay. Council recently took SDGs into consideration when developing the Sustainability Strategy.

There is close alignment between the SDGs and our responsibility as a local government to the long-term environmental, social and economic interests of our community. In developing the draft environment policy, council identified six SDGs that directly align to the purpose and principles of the policy. As the previous section outlines, mapping the policy against SDGs demonstrates council's commitment to national and internationally recognised goals and objectives.

The relevant goals are:



Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages



Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts



Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all



Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development



Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable



Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

CONSULTATION

The Natural Environment and Land Management team has undertaken extensive engagement with council officers, elected representatives, community (general public) and high valued stakeholder representatives. Engagement was undertaken over several months through face-to-face, on-line platforms, email and telephone.

COUNCIL OFFICER CONSULT

An email survey of officers across seven key sections involved in protecting the natural environment was undertaken. 53 officers were invited to participate from:

- Natural Environment and Land Management
- Sustainability and Emergency Management
- Planning and Regulatory Services
- Works and Field Services
- Infrastructure Strategy
- Coordination and Performance
- Community, Cultural and Economic Development.

29 officers provided qualitative responses to four questions. The questions asked are as follows:

- What are we doing well now in the natural environment?
- (A) What is not working as well as it should; and (B) Why is it not working well enough?
- What should we be aspiring to?
- What is your big idea?

The questions allowed for open comments, allowing contributors to answer however they wished. Not all questions received a comment from a contributor. Comments were categorised into high frequency themes. Where a comment contains multiple elements, it is consequently categorised against multiple themes.

Results from the feedback were analysed to identify insights and help inform the draft policy. The feedback also identified additional actions that council could take when developing relevant corporate documents in the near future e.g. Nature Conservation Strategy and Urban Greening Plan.

Table 3 outlines where the policy contributes to addressing the top council officer feedback themes to each question.



Trail within Flinders-Goolman
Conservation Estate

Internal Questions to Council Officers:	Top Feedback Themes (Response Number)	Example Comments	Council Policy Focus Area Alignment
1. What are we doing well now in the natural environment?	Securing and managing important areas (11)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The work that is undertaken using the Enviroplan funding by acquiring land for conservation, restoration and protection. Acquiring land for conservation purposes. 	1. Biodiversity and Threatened Species Recovery 3. Urban Biodiversity Enhancement 4. Natural Area Restoration and Protection
	Implementing the Enviroplan Program and Levy (11)		
	Greenspace and natural area management (8)		
2A. What is not working as well as it should?	Organisational integration and communication (8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We could still work a lot more effectively to have a more integrated approach to land management between different jurisdictions/ areas. 	4. Natural Area Restoration and Protection 5. Experiencing Nature 7. Governance, Measuring and Reporting
	Management of council's natural area and broader greenspace network - including parks (7)		
2B. Why is it not working well enough?	Insufficient resourcing, budget and investment (11)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The lack in true budget and resourcing requirements The city's planning scheme should support and assist in facilitating the conservation and environmental outcomes of the city. 	7. Governance, Measuring and Reporting
	Conflicting direction and planning (7)		
3. What should we be aspiring to?	Agreed corporate strategic direction and alignment (9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear collaboration and agreement in the planning and implementation of the replacement of vegetation again both in the built and Natural Environment. 	4. Natural Area Restoration and Protection 7. Governance, Measuring and Reporting
	High standards in management and protection (7)		
4. What is your big idea?	Integration and internal working group (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A council Environment Group that has representatives from each relevant area across council that would communicate what is going on, advocate on ideas and provide guidance. 	3. Urban Biodiversity Enhancement 5. Experiencing Nature 7. Governance, Measuring and Reporting
	Urban greening (3)		
	Increase funding (3)		
	Promotion and activation (3)		

Table 3: Policy response to council officer input.

COUNCILLOR COLLABORATION

Councillors were provided an opportunity for input into policy priorities through a briefing and workshop session on the 7 July 2020. The session involved two components, an overview of policy development approach along with time for Councillors to ask questions and provide feedback.

Table 4 outlines where a policy focus area and key principle/s addresses Councillors feedback on priorities.

Councillor Identified Priorities	Council Policy Focus Area and Key Principle Alignment
Council aligning with State Koala corridors	1. Biodiversity and Threatened Species Recovery Protect and improve habitat value within large areas of intact threatened species and priority wildlife habitat, including koalas. Understand, identify and reduce the impact of major threats to threatened species and priority wildlife, including koalas.
Council doing more for Koalas	
Council getting good offset outcomes	1. Biodiversity and Threatened Species Recovery Seek an approach whereby impacts are first avoided, minimised or mitigated before any remaining impacts are offset.
Protection of environment in the corridor around Mutdapilly	1. Biodiversity and Threatened Species Recovery Enhance and protect key habitat corridors to maintain or increase regional and local connectivity for threatened species and priority wildlife.
Long-term protection of Natural Area Estate	4. Natural Area Restoration and Protection Implement sound environmental management principles on council owned or managed land, focusing on long term protection, practical actions with foreseeable outcomes.
Council's management of Mount Beau Brummel	

Table 4: Policy response to Councillor Priorities.



ENVIRONMENT COMMUNITY REFERENCE GROUP (CRG) INVOLVEMENT

The Environment Community Reference Group (CRG) had an opportunity to have input in late 2019. They were asked what the key priorities for the future are. Responses and comments were categorised into themes. In developing the draft policy, these themes were addressed. Table 5 sets out how the draft policy has addressed the top feedback themes.

Question to CRG:	Top Feedback Themes (Response Number)	Example Comments	Council Policy Focus Area and Key Principle Alignment
What are the key priorities for Ipswich's natural environment over the next 5-10 years?	Preservation of Corridors and Connectivity (8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corridors need to be wide enough to sustain animals. Nature Corridors - maintain and enhance connectivity between corridors. 	1. Biodiversity and Threatened Species Recovery Protect and improve habitat value within large areas of intact threatened species and priority wildlife habitat, including koalas.
	Protection of Wildlife and Threatened Species - including habitat (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep large areas in natural condition alongside urban areas. Key areas/buffer zone increased. Small areas not enough to sustain 	Enhance and protect key habitat corridors to maintain or increase regional and local connectivity for threatened species and priority wildlife. 3. Urban Biodiversity Enhancement Catalogue, conserve and enhance urban biodiversity values and the ecological systems that support them.

Table 5: Policy response to CRG priorities.



COMMUNITY AND HIGH VALUED STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

Engagement was conducted with the community through an on-line survey available on the community engagement digital platform Shape Your Ipswich (SYI). In addition, specific engagement with high valued stakeholder sector representatives was undertaken through telephone interview.

There were 107 survey contributions provided by the general public through an online survey. Anybody with a connection to the city could participate.

Stakeholder representatives for 12 sectors participated in telephone interviews. The sectors included:

- Catchment Management
- Citywide Community Environmental Group
- Regional Environmental Community Group
- Development Industry
- Government Environmental Agency
- Natural Area User Group
- Council Landholder Partnership Program (Rural)
- Council Landholder Partnership Program (Urban)
- School Aged Children

- Utility Provider
- Youth
- Waterway User Group/Business.

Both the survey and interview involved similar questions allowing an understanding to be gained of:

- what natural environment elements the community most appreciate
- areas that need improvement and how to undertake this
- community vision for the natural environment
- actions the community feel are important for the natural environment's viability
- values and benefits of the natural environment.

The feedback was analysed to identify insights and subsequently included into an engagement report made available on SYI.

Table 6 details how the draft policy has addressed the insights and key feedback themes from community and stakeholder engagement.



Community and Stakeholder Key Themes	Example Comments	Council Policy Focus Area and Key Principle Alignment
Extent of greenspace and natural areas within the city is highly valued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I am impressed that there is so much natural environment around. ▪ We are lucky to have a huge green space in the centre of Ipswich and we have abundant nature reserves surrounding us in the form of national parks and other spaces. ▪ I love the natural bushlands and green spaces. 	<p>1. Biodiversity and Threatened Species Recovery Identify, protect, maintain and rehabilitate priority natural environment values of the city.</p> <p>Protect and improve habitat value within large areas of intact threatened species and priority wildlife habitat, including koalas.</p> <p>Enhance and protect key habitat corridors to maintain or increase regional and local connectivity for threatened species and priority wildlife.</p> <p>2. Wetlands and Waterways Improvement Protect, rehabilitate and maintain wetlands and waterways, including their associated corridors, for the benefit of aquatic and terrestrial wildlife, community liveability and continuation of traditional cultural practices.</p> <p>3. Urban Biodiversity Enhancement Catalogue, conserve and enhance urban biodiversity values and the ecological systems that support them.</p> <p>Create and enhance corridors in urban areas to provide connectivity and refuge for wildlife and ecosystem services functions.</p>



Community and Stakeholder Key Themes	Example Comments	Council Policy Focus Area and Key Principle Alignment
<p>Areas for improvement include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> management of council's natural areas and broader greenspace network (including parks) protecting wildlife and threatened species – particularly their habitat condition of the waterways, wetlands and associated riparian vegetation preservation of corridors and connectivity across the city expanding land use planning protection and more sustainable outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clean up weeds in council owned land and roadsides. Our laws to protect our threatened species needs to be improved as we are still clearing koala habitat at phenomenal rate. Improved waterway rehabilitation and improved access to riverside. The size of the riparian zones for wildlife corridors is too small. Integrate the natural environment policy into the planning scheme. 	<p>1. Biodiversity and Threatened Species Recovery Protect and improve habitat value within large areas of intact threatened species and priority wildlife habitat, including koalas.</p> <p>Further incorporate natural value importance into council's planning activities and general business operations.</p> <p>Implement sustainable land-use planning practices that concentrates urban development within the urban footprint in a compact development form as a desirable outcome, relative to meeting the need for housing, employment and other facilities and services for the city's growing community.</p> <p>Seek an approach whereby impacts are first avoided, minimised or mitigated before any remaining impacts are offset.</p> <p>2. Wetlands and Waterways Improvement Protect, rehabilitate and maintain wetlands and waterway corridors for the benefit of aquatic and terrestrial wildlife and community liveability.</p> <p>3. Urban Biodiversity Enhancement Catalogue, conserve and enhance urban biodiversity values and the ecological systems that support them.</p> <p>Create and enhance corridors in urban areas to provide connectivity and refuge for wildlife.</p> <p>4. Natural Area Restoration and Protection Implement sound environmental management principles on council owned or managed land, focusing on long term protection, practical actions with foreseeable outcomes.</p>

Community and Stakeholder Key Themes	Example Comments	Council Policy Focus Area and Key Principle Alignment
<p>The main visionary themes are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ balancing development and natural environment ▪ protection of significant habitat areas ▪ a restored natural environment network ▪ resilience of the natural environment (including corridors) ▪ an accessible and activated natural environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Become a model for excellence in environmental care and effective integration of development and conservation of the natural environment. ▪ A place that supports and encourages our native species of flora and fauna to co-exist with us. ▪ Natural environmental areas should be increased with native corridors at least 100 metre width. ▪ The Bremer River in particular is in a healthy condition, an icon for the right reasons, and a focus area for recreation in the city. ▪ I'd like to see every member of the community contributing to, and taking advantage of the many great outdoor areas we have. 	<p>1. Biodiversity and Threatened Species Recovery Identify, protect, maintain and rehabilitate priority natural environment values of the city.</p> <p>Protect and improve habitat value within large areas of intact threatened species and priority wildlife habitat, including koalas.</p> <p>Enhance and protect key habitat corridors to maintain or increase regional and local connectivity for threatened species and priority wildlife.</p> <p>Further incorporate natural value importance into council's planning activities and general business operations.</p> <p>2. Wetlands and Waterways Improvement Protect, rehabilitate and maintain wetlands and waterways, including their associated corridors, for the benefit of aquatic and terrestrial wildlife, community liveability and continuation of traditional cultural practices.</p> <p>5. Experiencing Nature Encourage community to connect with nature to foster a conservation ethic and develop environmental stewards.</p> <p>Provide, plan, develop, manage, maintain and activate high quality sustainable outdoor/nature-based recreation opportunities in natural areas.</p> <p>Provide, manage and maintain outdoor/nature-based recreation activities, facilities and settings that are complementary to and protect the natural values of the settings within which they are positioned.</p>

Community and Stakeholder Key Themes	Example Comments	Council Policy Focus Area and Key Principle Alignment
<p>Actions most mentioned needing council attention are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ improve land use planning and control ▪ boost community support and partnerships programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make a better planning scheme that does not allow for unsustainable development and that takes priority of the environment. ▪ A planning and policy framework that provides certainty through clearly identifying corridors of value and improvement. ▪ Establish a strong, defensible position on ecologically sustainable development and commit to this position and direction across growth, development and investment as fundamental objective and criteria in decision making. ▪ Incentives for landholders and industry. ▪ Funding for local community groups focusing on educating and promoting the care of local habitats. 	<p>1. Biodiversity and Threatened Species Recovery Further incorporate natural value importance into council's planning activities and general business operations.</p> <p>Implement sustainable land-use planning practices that concentrates urban development within the urban footprint in a compact development form as a desirable outcome, relative to meeting the need for housing, employment and other facilities and services for the city's growing community.</p> <p>Develop and implement regulatory (e.g. local laws) and non-regulatory (e.g. incentives) tools that supports natural environment outcomes on public and private land.</p> <p>Seek an approach whereby negative impacts are first avoided, minimised or mitigated before any remaining impacts are offset.</p> <p>6. Community Awareness and Support Embrace opportunities to partner with Indigenous Land Management Businesses, government agencies, universities, research organisations, regional bodies and other local governments on collaborative projects.</p> <p>Work closely with the community through collaboration, partnerships and support programs that empower and build capacity as environmental stewards.</p> <p>Support community contribution of information through citizen science programs.</p>

Community and Stakeholder Key Themes	Example Comments	Council Policy Focus Area and Key Principle Alignment
<p>The highly recognised ecosystem services values include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ mental and physical health benefit ■ recreation and aesthetic ■ habitat provisions for native plants and animals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Greener healthier environments support mental wellbeing. ■ Healthy environments mean healthy communities and healthy people - we want to be able to breathe in the future. ■ It encourages people to get outdoors and try and lead a healthier lifestyle. ■ The overall amenity and liveability of the city is significantly increased when the preservation of the natural environment is at the forefront of developments. ■ Preserving our natural flora and fauna is a priority for the future generations, we have koala habitat that is currently under incredible duress from the natural disasters. 	<p>Policy Statements</p> <p>Council is committed to protect, enhance and restore the health of the city's natural environment values both on public and private lands for the benefit, use and lifestyle of current and future generations.</p> <p>That protecting the natural environment for its own intrinsic value is an important objective for all the community and for council.</p> <p>Council acknowledges a healthy natural environment is fundamental to cultural, social, physical and economic wellbeing of the community.</p>

Table 6: Policy response to community and high valued stakeholder feedback.

DRAFT NATURAL ENVIRONMENT POLICY STATEMENT AND PRINCIPLES

All the information collected to date including that presented above and has been assessed and considered and the most locally relevant and pertinent points have been drawn out to develop the following draft policy.

POLICY STATEMENT

Council is committed to conserve, protect, enhance and restore the health of the city's natural environment values both on public and private lands for the benefit, use and lifestyle of current and future generations.

That protecting the natural environment for its own intrinsic value is an important objective for all the community and for council.

Council acknowledges a healthy natural environment is fundamental to cultural, social, physical and economic wellbeing of the community.

By continuing to operate a proactive and evidence-based approach, we will strive to ensure improvement to the natural environment.

Council recognises the important contribution a healthy natural environment makes in transitioning to a sustainable city.

POLICY PRINCIPLES

The purpose of the policy is to strengthen council's commitment to conserve, protect, enhance and restore the natural environment and its values, through the following seven focus areas and associated principles:

1. Biodiversity and Threatened Species Recovery

- Identify, protect, maintain and rehabilitate priority natural environment values of the city.
- Protect and improve habitat value within large areas of intact threatened species and priority wildlife habitat, including koalas.
- Enhance and protect key habitat corridors to maintain or increase regional and local connectivity for threatened species and priority wildlife.
- Understand, identify and reduce the impact of threats to threatened species and priority wildlife, including koalas.
- Gather data, prioritise, plan and support other government initiatives for threatened species and priority wildlife, including locally significant wildlife.
- Further incorporate natural value importance into council's planning activities and general business operations.

- Implement sustainable land-use planning practices that concentrates urban development within the urban footprint in a compact development form as a desirable outcome, relative to meeting the need for housing, employment and other facilities and services for the city's growing community.
- Develop and implement regulatory (e.g. local laws) and non-regulatory (e.g. incentives) tools that supports natural environment outcomes on public and private land.
- Seek an approach whereby negative impacts are first avoided, minimised or mitigated before any remaining impacts are offset.

2. Wetlands and Waterways Improvement

- Protect, rehabilitate and maintain wetlands and waterways, including their associated corridors, for the benefit of aquatic and terrestrial wildlife, community liveability and continuation of traditional cultural practices.
- Invest in waterway recovery projects at priority sites targeting improved in-stream habitat condition, aquatic connectivity and riparian weed management and revegetation.
- Monitor aquatic communities and connectivity of the region's waterways to quantify threats, as well as measure the outcomes of remediation activities.
- Identify and address key sources of sediment which impact aquatic communities through poor water quality and degraded stream morphology.
- Improve streambank stabilisation at strategic locations supporting habitat conditions for priority wildlife, including platypus.
- Increase community education and awareness of key issues impacting aquatic biodiversity to encourage behavioural change and stewardship of the city's waterways and wetlands.

3. Urban Biodiversity Enhancement

- Catalogue, conserve and enhance urban biodiversity values and the ecological systems that support them.
- Create and enhance corridors in urban areas to provide connectivity and refuge for wildlife and ecosystem services functions.

4. Natural Area Restoration and Protection

- Invest in strategic restoration activities to re-establish corridor linkages through the landscape, including using offsets or partnerships programs.
- Implement sound environmental management principles* on council owned or managed land, focusing on long term protection, practical actions with foreseeable outcomes.
- Manage protected natural areas and partner with private landholders in core habitat areas to provide refuge for native plants and animals from the impacts of changing climate.

5. Experiencing Nature

- Support Traditional Owners with maintaining connection to cultural lands and sites.
- Encourage community to connect with nature to foster a conservation ethic and develop environmental stewards.
- Promote and provide for sustainable outdoor/nature-based recreational activities, environmental education and eco-tourism opportunities within natural areas, recognising the significant community benefit these areas provide.
- Invest in infrastructure and management activities that supports sustainable provision of nature experiences.
- Provide, plan, develop, manage, maintain and activate high quality sustainable outdoor/nature-based recreation opportunities in natural areas.
- Assess the need for the provision of outdoor/nature-based recreation activities based on demand and the identification of suitable sites to ensure a sustainable fit between natural values and outdoor/nature-based recreation activities.
- Provide, manage and maintain outdoor/nature-based recreation activities, facilities and settings that are complementary to and protect the natural values of the settings within which they are positioned.

6. Community Awareness and Support

- Embrace opportunities to partner with Indigenous Land Management Businesses, government agencies, universities, research organisations, regional bodies and other local governments on collaborative projects.
- Work closely with the community through collaboration, partnerships and support programs that empower and build capacity as environmental stewards.
- Support community contribution of information through citizen science programs.
- Increase recognition within the community and council of natural environment ecosystem services as well as Cultural Heritage and Cultural Landscape values.

7. Governance, Measuring and Reporting

- Implement outcome based, priority driven and adaptive investment of council funds, including Ipswich Enviroplan Levy, general revenue and external grants.
- Comply with relevant statutory responsibilities, legislation, policy and plans, while pursuing new approaches, continual improvement, environmental excellence and demonstrating leadership in operations and activities.
- Identify, collect, monitor, review, and report about natural values and environmental performance.
- Operate programs and undertake priorities driven by best available knowledge and data, cross-referenced with community interest and capability to ensure confidence in achieving outcomes.

Definition

Sound Environmental Management Principles:
With reference to this policy, sound environmental management principles includes:

- natural environment values, inclusive of cultural landscape values, should be protected, managed and enhanced to conserve their natural condition
- best practice pest plant, animal and fire management should be implemented
- visitor use should be managed for inspirational, educational, cultural and nature-based recreation at a level that will maintain natural values and cultural landscapes
- scientific and educational enquiry should be provided and promoted at ecologically sustainable levels.

SUMMARY

Council's Natural Environment Policy has been developed to provide strategic direction for the green elements, such as bushland and waterways, which make up the city. The policy will inform decision making, investment and natural environment programs. The extensive internal and external consultation, research, benchmarking and national strategy review informed the policy development and will be used in any future strategy/plan development.

HAVE YOUR SAY

In recognition of the importance of collaboration in protecting the natural environment, council is seeking feedback on the draft policy statement and principles via Shape Your Ipswich (Shapeyouripswich.com.au).

Contact:

Senior Planning Officer (Strategic Conservation Planning)
council@ipswich.qld.gov.au
(07) 3810 6666





Ipswich City Council
PO Box 191, Ipswich QLD 4305, Australia

Phone (07) 3810 6666
council@ipswich.qld.gov.au
ipswich.qld.gov.au

Join us online:



[/IpswichCityCouncil](https://www.facebook.com/IpswichCityCouncil)



[/ipswich-city-council](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ipswich-city-council)



[/IpswichCityCouncilTV](https://www.youtube.com/IpswichCityCouncilTV)