

Environmental Protection and Sustainability Policy

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| Policy Type | Governance Policy | Version: | 1.0 |
| Responsible Officer | Manager Development and Governance | Date Approved: | 20/01/2021 |
| Review Officer: | Senior Environmental Advisor | Review Due: | 19/12/2024 |
| Author: | Senior Environmental Advisor | Commencement: | 20/01/2021 |

1. PURPOSE

This policy has been developed in recognition of the many natural assets of the Shire and the value that its residents and visitors place upon them. The intent of this policy is to build upon Council's current Corporate Plan and to establish the framework for environmental protection and sustainability within the organisation.

Mareeba Shire has a diversity of landscapes ranging from a Wet Tropics World Heritage Area to the dry savannah environmental zones. It is home to many outstanding natural values such as the Barron River Falls, Mt Lewis, the historic limestone karst structures at Chillagoe, and a variety of unique fauna.

The Shire's dominant land use is primary production, has less than 5% urban land use and is also rich in mineral resources. Located with the tropical to subtropical zones, it experiences dry cool winters and a wet season spanning from December to April each year. There are two distinct water catchments of the Mitchell and Barron Rivers, where the Mitchell flows to the Gulf of Carpentaria and the Barron River flows to the World Heritage Great Barrier Reef lagoon.

2. SCOPE

This policy is applicable to all of Council and its employees in all decisions and activities. The policy does not address staff welfare (health and safety) as it is covered by the Council's Worksafe Program.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

3.1 LEGISLATION COMPLIANCE

Council acknowledges and endeavours to comply with:

- all relevant environmental legislation and regulations by undertaking due diligence prior to projects and activities and by implementing all reasonable and practicable measures to minimise environmental and biosecurity harm and risk (**General Environmental Duty**) (**General Biosecurity Obligation**).
- the conditions and exemption requirements for environmental statutory approvals such as:
 - Environmental Authority for Council's Environmentally Relevant Activities under the *Environmental Protection Act 1994* (Qld) (EP Act)
 - Protected Flora Permit and Vegetation Management Permit
 - Wet Tropics Infrastructure Maintenance Permit

Human Rights Compatibility Statement

The *Human Rights Act 2019* (HR Act) (Qld) came into effect on 1 January 2020 and will mean fairer laws, policies and practices by public entities when dealing with the community on a day-to-day basis. This policy has been drafted in alignment with obligations under s 58 of the HR Act.

- implementation of the current *State Planning Policy* relevant to environmental matters.

3.2 NATURAL ASSET PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT

Council will consider the protection of the natural environment in Council business through:

- the identification and consideration of environmental risks, in particular by implementing Council's *Biosecurity Plan 2020 -2025* and fire management plans
- undertaking staff training and environmental awareness
- preparation of environmental management plans and procedures, and
- when deemed necessary, Council will investigate and exercise its regulatory powers to facilitate environmental protection.

Council will continue Council's membership of the Reef Guardian Council Program and development of its *Reef Guardian Council Action Plan* which underpins Council's commitment to clean and healthy waterways, improved environmental outcomes and managing the effects of climate change.

Council will partner with Natural Resource Management (NRM) groups, industry bodies and community groups to facilitate efficient and effective natural asset protection and management.

Council will plan and undertake fire prevention on land managed by Council by maintaining firebreaks and undertaking fire prevention burns to protect adjacent properties and to minimise environmental damage.

3.3 SUSTAINABLE WASTE MANAGEMENT

Council will provide for environmentally responsible waste and wastewater management infrastructure to enable a growing and confident Mareeba Shire.

Council will pursue appropriate and cost effective strategies to minimise waste, realise circular economy opportunities and reduce littering and illegal dumping through the implementation of its *Waste Management Services Strategy 2018 - 2027*.

3.4 AN ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Council will prepare for a sustainable future by:

- having regard to environmental sustainability considerations when developing the Council Planning Scheme
- being as resilient as possible through proactively identifying and where possible mitigating for potential climate change risks
- meeting legislated exhaust emission design standards to reduce pollution
- conducting energy consumption audits and identifying opportunities for improved energy efficiency and supply
- strategic planning for drinking water schemes including water security, treatment and reticulation, and
- implementing a strategy for active recreation and to provide quality public spaces and facilities to encourage active communities and to improve the visual appeal and liveability within the Shire

4. REPORTING

The EP Act requires all persons to notify any environmental incident that threatens environmental harm within 24 hours to their Supervisor / Manager or Director as appropriate (**Duty to Notify**).

All incidents that threaten environmental harm will be reported to the State Environmental Regulator within 24 hours. All breaches of the Environmental Authority will be notified within 24 hours to the State Environmental Regulator.

All reporting required under the statutory authorities will be complied with and any identified biosecurity prohibited matters will be notified to the State Biosecurity Agency as soon as practicable.

5. DEFINITIONS

| Term | Meaning |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Biosecurity Matter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A living thing, other than human or part of a human; or • A pathogenic agent that can cause disease in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a living thing other than a human; or ○ human, by the transmission of the pathogenic agent from the animal to the human; or • A disease; or • A contaminant. |
| Circular Economy | This approach to waste management aims to keep waste materials being recycled in the economy at their highest value for as long as possible in recognition that recycling produces more jobs and less environmental impact than landfilling. |
| Climate Change | A change in the state of the climate that can be identified (<i>e.g.</i> by statistical tests) by changes in the mean and/or variability of its properties, and that persists for an extended period of time, typically decades or longer. |
| Duty to Notify | The duty to notify requires a person or a company to give notice to the State Environmental Regulator where serious or material environmental harm (that is not authorised under the EP Act) is caused or threatened. |
| Environmental Authority | Council holds a statutory authority to operate a number of prescribed activities under the EP Act. |
| Environmental Harm | Any adverse effect, or potential adverse effect (whether temporary or permanent and of whatever magnitude, duration or frequency) on an environmental value, and includes environmental nuisance. |
| Environmental Sustainability | Development which aims to meet the needs of growing and confident Mareeba shire, while conserving our ecosystems for the benefit of future generations. |
| General Biosecurity Obligation | A person must take all reasonable and practicable measures to prevent or minimise the biosecurity risk, prevent or minimise adverse effects on a biosecurity consideration, and minimise the likelihood of causing a biosecurity event. |
| General Environmental Duty | A person must not carry out any activity that causes, or is likely to cause, environmental harm unless the person takes all reasonable and practicable measures to prevent or minimise the harm. |
| Reef Guardian | A steward for the Great Barrier Reef taking voluntary actions beyond what is required by law and sharing information. These actions will help to improve the economic sustainability of industries operating in the Great Barrier Reef Region and ensure the environmental sustainability of the Marine Park. |
| Waste | A left over or unwanted by-product. It can be a gas, liquid, solid or energy or a combination. Waste can be municipal, commercial, industrial in origin |

or from construction and demolition activities. Council's *Waste Management Services Strategy 2018 - 2027* provides a set of guiding principles to inform decisions about waste.

6. RELATED DOCUMENTS AND REFERENCES

Biosecurity Act 2014 (Qld)
Biosecurity Plan 2020 -2025 (MSC)
Climate Change Resilience Policy (MSC)
Corporate Plan 2021 - 2025 (MSC)
Environmental Authority EPPR01792213
Environmental Protection Act 1994 (Qld)
Mareeba Shire Council Planning Scheme
Reef Guardian Council Action Plan (MSC)
Waste Management Services Strategy 2018 - 2027 (MSC)
Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011 (Qld)

7. REVIEW

It is the responsibility of the Manager Development and Governance to monitor the adequacy of this policy and implement and approve appropriate changes. This policy will be formally reviewed every four (4) years or as required by Council.