

An aerial photograph of a river meandering through a lush, green forest. The river is a vibrant turquoise color, contrasting with the deep green of the surrounding trees. The river's path is highly irregular, with several large loops and smaller curves. The forest appears dense and healthy. The overall scene is a beautiful representation of a natural ecosystem.

Respecting First Nations peoples' traditional ecological knowledge in the 2021 review of the South East Queensland Natural Resource Management Plan

Towards a Sustainable and Prosperous South East Queensland

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## About Healthy Land & Water

Healthy Land & Water is coordinating the review and update of the *South East Queensland Natural Resource Management Plan (SEQ NRM Plan)* on behalf the region's many stakeholders. This document is focused on the incorporation of First Nations peoples traditional knowledge into the Plan.

Healthy Land & Water is the peak environmental group for South East Queensland (SEQ). It is the official natural resource management group for SEQ. For over 20 years it has been dedicated to investing in and leading initiatives to **build the prosperity, liveability, and sustainability of our 'future region'**.

We are experts in research, monitoring, evaluation and project management. Our team works closely with the community and connects many stakeholders to achieve outcomes for the region, as it monitors and restores waterways and landscapes, improves native habitats, manages weeds, protects native species, informs policy and supports communities to improve and protect the environment for future generations.

Working in partnership with Traditional Owners, government, private industry, utilities and the community, Healthy Land & Water delivers innovative and science-based solutions to challenges affecting the environment. The combination of scientific expertise and on-ground management works to deliver Healthy Land & Water's mission to lead and connect through science and actions that will preserve and enhance our natural assets and support resilient regions long into the future.

## Disclaimer

The material contained in this publication is produced for general information only. It is not intended as professional advice on specific applications. It is the responsibility of the user to determine the suitability and appropriateness of the material contained in this publication to specific applications. No person should act or fail to act on the basis of any material contained in this publication without first obtaining specific independent professional advice. Healthy Land & Water and the participants of our network expressly disclaim any and all liability to any person in respect of anything done by any such person in reliance, whether in whole or in part, on this publication. The information contained in this publication does not necessarily represent the views of Healthy Land & Water or the participants of our network.

## Traditional Owner Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the place we now live has been nurtured by Australia's First peoples for tens of thousands of years. We believe the spiritual, cultural and physical consciousness gained through this custodianship is vital to maintaining the future of our region.

SEQ is home to several First Nations groups, each with unique languages and stories. First Nations people have an ongoing and unique connection to their ancestral lands and have responsibilities to these lands under their traditional law and customs. We acknowledge and embrace Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples history, custodianship and relationships. Our vision is for regional leadership that enables respectful and appropriate inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the delivery of natural resource management activities and strives for equitable outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.

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**There's a specialness about South East Queensland, more felt than described.** For us all it is our home, and for First Nations people it has been for more than 50,000 years. Our natural resources and our landscapes shape our past, our present and our future. Protecting, restoring and enjoying our natural assets, nurturing thriving communities, and adjusting to the changing climate, challenges and inspires us. We claim our part in shaping the **region's future**, for ourselves, for our children and for theirs.

- Bob Spiers, South East Queenslander



# 1 Introduction

The 2021 review of the *South East Queensland Natural Resource Management Plan (SEQ NRM Plan)* has reinforced the guiding principle that all lands and other natural assets in the region form First Nations landscapes and are maintained by various natural resource managers.

The natural resources of South East Queensland (SEQ) have been shaped by First Nations occupants for tens of thousands of years, with **the region's lands, waters, atmosphere and biodiversity** all managed to support a thriving, rich, and diverse culture. European settlement has had significant impacts.<sup>1</sup>

**First Nations' knowledge and science**, which is at the core of caring for Country, remains strong and tangible.<sup>2</sup> First Nations' science continues to grow in the modern world and is increasingly recognised.

The *SEQ NRM Plan* sets out the natural asset targets, initiatives, and pathways to achieve a balance between nature and people in SEQ. This revision has strongly recognised the need to involve Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in looking after Country and its people.

This report affirms that regional natural resource management planning in SEQ is based on a long and meaningful history of collaborating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This also acknowledges and recognises the integration of Indigenous values in planning and preserving cultural assets and landscapes.

Strong foundations have been laid. A range of forums and mechanisms, such as the *Healthy Land & Water Reconciliation Action Plan*, have been implemented to facilitate ongoing conversation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that will nurture this relationship to enhance the integration of Indigenous values in planning.

This collaboration is ongoing through various governance arrangements embedded in regional body representation and Memorandums of Understanding with First Nations' groups for the purposes of achieving natural resource management targets.

Healthy Land & Water **acknowledges that SEQ has been nurtured by Australia's First peoples** for tens of thousands of years, and that the spiritual, cultural and physical consciousness gained through this custodianship is vital to maintaining the future of the region.

Healthy Land & Water believes that natural resource planning, management and action can be guided by holistic traditional knowledge and values—spiritual and respectful attitudes to the Country

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<sup>1</sup> South East Queensland Regional Coordination Group (2009) *South East Queensland Natural Resource Management Plan 2009– 2031*, State of Queensland (Department of Environment and Resource Management).

<sup>2</sup> Fischer M, Burns D, Bolzenius J, Costello C, Low Choy D. 2019. *Quandamooka Country: The role of science and knowledge in Traditional Owner-led land and sea management*. In: Tibbetts IR, Rothlisberg PC, Neil DT, Homburg TA, Brewer DT, & Arthington AH (Eds). *Moreton Bay Quandamooka & Catchment: Past, present, and future*. The Moreton Bay Foundation. Brisbane, Australia.

of First Nations are a key in the recovery of significant natural resource values. Members of the SEQ Traditional Owners Alliance (SEQTOA) expressed this view in the first SEQ NRM Plan in 2009 (Box 1).<sup>3</sup>

***“Traditional society was founded on respect for the environment. Traditional people recognised their dependence on the ecosystem. Group behaviour and resource use were directed by Elders who were guided by traditional knowledge. Long-term observation of their country and its many species gave traditional people detailed knowledge of numerous inter-relationships. This added to their resource management decisions. Their dependence on, respect for and awe of their environment governed their lifestyles when the environment changed. They survived Ice Ages and sea-level fluctuations of hundreds of metres. When resources were weak those resources were protected by ‘closures’ imposed by the Elders. Other control measures were provided by the transient and cyclical use of camping places and by restrictions imposed by totem relationships. Eco-system services performed one function that might not now be appreciated—the traditional people related directly to the ‘country’, in its holistic complexity, and the people adapted when it changed.”*** (2008 SEQTOA)

Box 1: Cultural landscapes and traditional society statement by SEQ Traditional Owners Alliance (SEQTOA) in the first SEQ NRM Plan in 2009.

Along with logical and ethical reasons to integrate traditional ecological knowledge (with the consent of knowledge holders) there are legislative imperatives including free, prior and informed consent (FPIC).<sup>4</sup> The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and many other international and national laws and policies, recognise FPIC as the best practice approach to engaging with Indigenous knowledge.<sup>5</sup>

FPIC requires that individuals and groups are provided with sufficient accessible information to enable full consideration of the risks and benefits of a proposed project, prior to them making a decision about whether or not to consent to that proposal.<sup>6</sup>

The requirement for consent entitles Indigenous peoples to determine the outcome of decision-making that affects them.

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<sup>3</sup> South East Queensland Regional Coordination Group (2009) South East Queensland Natural Resource Management Plan 2009– 2031, State of Queensland (Department of Environment and Resource Management).

<sup>4</sup> *Native Title Act 1993 (Cth) (NTA)* and the *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003 (Qld) (ACHA)*.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) viewed August 2021

[https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP\\_E\\_web.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Woodward, E., Hill, R., Harkness, P. and R. Archer (Eds) 2020 *Our Knowledge Our Way in caring for Country: Indigenous-led approaches to strengthening and sharing our knowledge for land and sea management. Best Practice Guidelines from Australian experiences.* NAILSMA and CSIRO.

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## 2 First Nations of South East Queensland

The First Nations peoples of South East Queensland (SEQ) are rich and diverse. The region comprises of many autonomous communities (nations) that have shared and distinct languages, cultural practices, Songlines and Dreamings (Figure 1). Since time immemorial, First Nations peoples have cared for Country, and Country has cared for them.

The statutory regional plan for South East Queensland, *ShapingSEQ*, acknowledges that the SEQ of today is a changed place, where traditional Country is often shared. However, First Nations have an ongoing and unique connection to their ancestral lands and have responsibilities to the land and sea under their respective traditional laws and customs. Country continues to have a role in the spiritual, social and economic future of First Nations peoples.

*ShapingSEQ* also acknowledges this spiritual and physical connection with Country and pledges to engage First Nations in maintaining and enhancing the health of SEQ and the wellbeing of First Nations peoples. *ShapingSEQ*, which was developed through extensive consultation with First Nations representatives from across the region, states that cultural landscapes overlap with many other values in the region and are recognised for a variety of reasons. The example of the Glass House Mountains in the Sunshine Coast hinterland is an iconic set of physical elements in SEQ that are on the National Heritage Register and also hold great meaning for First Nations peoples as part of creation or Dreamtime Stories. Many roads, such as Old Gympie Road, follow ancient pathways that connected First Nations.

In accordance with High Court of Australia determinations, all governments recognise First Nations rights and interests over land and sea Country, and their active role in the ongoing management of cultural and natural resources. This also includes the important role these resources play in the social, spiritual and economic future of society.<sup>7</sup>

The *SEQ NRM Plan* is a key delivery mechanism for *ShapingSEQ* and in this role can progress the integration of First Nations aspirations as they have been communicated. This includes the incorporation - where considered appropriate - of traditional ecological knowledge as part of the regulatory land use planning framework.

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<sup>7</sup> Department of Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning (DLGP), 2017: "*ShapingSEQ*, South East Queensland Regional Plan 2017", Queensland State Government.



Figure 1: Map of Traditional Owner groups in SEQ<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> Department of Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning (DLGP), 2017: "ShapingSEQ, South East Queensland Regional Plan 2017", Queensland State Government.

## 2.1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in South East Queensland

About 40% of Queensland's First Nations peoples live in South East Queensland (SEQ).

As with other urban/peri-urban regions in south-eastern Australia, SEQ contains a diverse First Nations population that is comprised of individuals and families drawn from communities based across Australia. They consist of those who identify as descendants of the original inhabitants of the region (First Nations) and those who have moved to the region and made it their home (historical and contemporary residents). With the increasing urbanisation of First Nations peoples, it is a region with a steadily growing First Nations population.

The evidence emerging from research clearly demonstrates that First Nations peoples' consideration of the future is significantly influenced and dominated by economic aspirations which are seen as fundamental survival strategies for their communities.<sup>9</sup> Many other initiatives can be linked and/or run in parallel with natural resource management initiatives which can start to address some long-standing socio-economic issues and the capacity of First Nations peoples to be involved in natural resource management.<sup>10</sup>

Healthy Land & Water's approach to engaging First Nations draws the distinction between SEQ specific and non SEQ First Nations for natural resource management. It requires different purposes, approaches and methods in the engagement with the two different groups of First Nations peoples.

Therefore, the following generic attributes of SEQ First Nations' groups have been used in the development of engagement initiatives:

1. In the SEQ context, Indigenous engagement will be with a range of urban and peri-urban communities and Traditional Owners who can have significantly different backgrounds, experiences and aspirations.
2. Sources and ownership of traditional First Nations' knowledge varies across the region and between groups with differing gaps existing.
3. Sufficient corporate knowledge and experience still exist in SEQ Indigenous communities with respect to the 'regional' model of engagement and its benefits to them as a whole, as has been demonstrated through the SEQ Traditional Owner Land and Sea Management Alliance (SEQTOLMA).
4. All groups are at different stages in having their rights and interests formally recognised.

These attributes have formed the basis for an Indigenous Engagement Action Plan for Healthy Land & Water including recommendations for implementation based on existing planning/strategic documents<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Low Choy, D., Clarke, P., Jones, D., Serrao-Neumann, S., Hales, R. and Koschade, O. 2013. *Aboriginal reconnections: Understanding coastal urban and peri-urban Indigenous people's vulnerability and adaptive capacity to climate change*, National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility, Gold Coast, 139 pp.

<sup>10</sup> Low Choy, D., Clarke, P., Jones, D., Serrao-Neumann, S., Hales, R. and Koschade, O. 2013. *Aboriginal reconnections: Understanding coastal urban and peri-urban Indigenous people's vulnerability and adaptive capacity to climate change*, National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility, Gold Coast, 139 pp.

<sup>11</sup> Low Choy, D. (2017) Towards an Indigenous Engagement Action Plan for Healthy Land & Water for the South East Queensland Region, Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation (QYAC).



### 3 First Nations and natural resource management planning in South East Queensland

First Nations peoples have a long involvement in natural resource management planning in South East Queensland (SEQ) at multiple scales. This stretches back many thousands of years and predates the existing natural resource management planning frameworks that now exist within government and community. Since European settlement First Nations peoples have advocated for effective planning for Country that respects their ecological and cultural knowledge. When government was able to listen, First Nations leaders have successfully played a pivotal role in the integration of Indigenous values in land use planning and resource management.<sup>12 13</sup>

The SEQ community formulated the first iteration of a natural resource management plan (post European settlement) some 20 years ago. Since this time First Nations voices and representations have strongly advocated for their rights and interests to be adequately incorporated and their management of traditional ecological knowledge to be empowered.

Healthy Land & Water has increasingly recognised that engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is a critical element of plan review processes. We are fortunate to draw on a significant body of pre-existing information that has been collated through past consultation activities for planning in SEQ.

The *SEQ NRM Plan* review process has worked to recognise the outcomes of past engagement whilst providing multiple opportunities for First Nations and Traditional Owners to revise and provide new input as they considered appropriate. The *SEQ NRM Plan* review process recognised that in many instances past cultural and traditional ecological knowledge information communicated may no longer be appropriate. Accordingly, First Nations bodies have been provided the opportunity to advise where this was the case. It was also recognised that Traditional Owner groups may wish to engage at a time and place of their choosing while recognising other priorities and sensitivities that groups may have (including the many risks and priorities within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities during the COVID-19 global pandemic which coincided with the review).

The below is a short summary of key engagement activities previously undertaken that the *SEQ NRM Plan* review has referred to. All First Nations of the SEQ region have been engaged with to advise that this forms the critical body of knowledge of the land and sea aspirations of Traditional Owners as they relate to the SEQ region as a collective whole.

- The Regional Indigenous Advisory Group (2001) supported the SEQ Western Catchments NRM Group to establish targets for the development of a draft Traditional Owner management plan by the end of 2005 and priorities to inform future planning.
- The South East Queensland Traditional Owner Advisory Board (2002) mapped out many aspirations for the region for the purposes of informing the *South East Queensland Natural Resource Management Plan (SEQ NRM Plan)*.
- The Office of Urban Management's *SEQ Draft Regional Plan* included outcomes of the SEQ Traditional Owner negotiated framework as having a vital role to play in future planning activities (2004).
- The State Indigenous NRM Network (SINRMN) guidance to the Queensland Government on how natural resource management planning activities should be undertaken in Queensland (2005).

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<sup>12</sup> Low Choy, DC, Wadsworth, J & Burns, D, (2009) Identifying and incorporating indigenous landscape values into regional planning processes, Urban Research Program, Griffith University, Brisbane.

<sup>13</sup> Low Choy, DC, Wadsworth, J & Burns, D, (2010) Seeing the Landscape through New Eyes: Identifying and incorporating indigenous landscape values into regional planning processes, in *Australian Planner*, Vol 47, September 2010, pp 178-190. Respecting First Nations peoples' traditional ecological knowledge in the 2021 review of the South East Queensland Natural Resource Management Plan

- Work undertaken to inform the *SEQ NRM Plan* and *Regional Investment Strategy* for the Traditional Owners SEQ (2005).
- Through consultation with the South East Queensland Traditional Owners' Land and Sea Management Alliance (SEQTOLSMA), the *South East Queensland Regional Plan 2005- 2026* was released and included Traditional Owner aspirations and protocols for engagement in planning activities for the region. SEQTOLSMA was formed on the success of the previous Traditional Owner-led structures that existed for SEQ natural resource management activities.
- To accompany the 2005 *Regional Plan* the SEQTOLSMA (later known as SEQTOA) released "OUR PLAN, the *South East Queensland Aboriginal Traditional Owner Cultural Resource Management Plan*", and its accompanying "Our Investment Strategy". This plan aspired to a future where Traditional Owners' connections to SEQ Country were widely recognised and Traditional Owners were fully engaged and involved in cultural resource management decision-making processes and actions on and about Country.
- The release of the *South East Queensland Regional Plan 2009–2031* and the *SEQ NRM Plan 2009–2031* occurred. Both recognised directions provided by Traditional Owners resulted in the Regional Plan acknowledging that all lands and other natural assets in the region formed traditional Aboriginal landscapes. The *SEQ NRM Plan* highlighted that Traditional Owner knowledge and values had maintained the values within the region for millennia. A key activity identified at this time was the need to achieve active involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in community planning and decision-making.
- By 2015 many Traditional Owner entities in SEQ had established their own company structures and the SEQTOA Board had resolved to wind up the entity. Nevertheless, a review of the *SEQ Traditional Owner Cultural Resource Management Plan* was undertaken and this informed the planning document '*Managing Natural Assets for a Prosperous South East Queensland - A plan to support state and local government, industry and the community achieve social, economic and environmental visions for the region*'. Alongside this, an update to the *SEQ NRM Plan* was undertaken and included considered engagement with Traditional Owner entities across SEQ.
- In 2017 the '*ShapingSEQ 2017: SEQ Regional Plan*' was released by the Department of State Development Manufacturing, Industry and Planning. A key source of information and implementation for *ShapingSEQ* was the delivery of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander forums to help inform planning and the rollout of programs in *ShapingSEQ* and other state planning initiatives. Uniquely the development of *ShapingSEQ* brought together Traditional Owners from across the region to confirm land and sea aspirations and how individual Nations should be appropriately recognised within the statutory plan.

At a sub-region, or more accurately a First Nation scale (as depicted in Figure 1), Traditional Owners (many recognised as sovereign custodians by Native Title determinations) have developed stewardship plans and other strategic documents to guide and influence policy and land use planning decisions.

One example of such an organisation is the Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation (QYAC). QYAC is the registered Prescribed Body Corporate (PBC) created in accordance with the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth). QYAC acts as the agent for the Quandamooka peoples' Native Title rights and interests in land and sea Country. QYAC is also the registered cultural heritage body under the *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003* (QLD) and is responsible for cultural heritage management across the Quandamooka Estate (Figure 2).

The Quandamooka Estate includes the majority of Quandamooka (Moreton Bay). QYAC on behalf of the Quandamooka people is actively involved and in many cases leading the planning and stewardship of matters related to Quandamooka Country. The Quandamooka Aboriginal Land and Sea Management Agency (QALSMA) manages Naree Budjong Djara National Park as part of a joint management arrangement with Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS). This has direct benefits for the restoration of, and reduction in threats to, the ecological character of Quandamooka.



Figure 2: Quandamooka Country/Estate.

The following are some current examples of the range and importance of projects and initiatives led by or involving First Nations peoples in the region that have also contributed significantly to the *SEQ NRM Plan* review process. Note that this list is not holistic.

- Moreton Bay Ramsar Wetland project – Healthy Land & Water, alongside project delivery partners including Traditional Owners, private landowners, land managers and local Landcare groups, is working to reduce threats and restore habitat in and around the Moreton Bay Ramsar site. Project activities include weed removal, feral pest eradication, revegetation, habitat restoration, public awareness campaigns and debris removal.
- The Pig Control on Quandamooka Country program – This program is being rolled out across more than 600 hectares of Quandamooka Country to reduce and manage the island's feral pig population, estimated to be between 20-40 pigs. The collaboration between QYAC and QPWS has provided Quandamooka rangers with the opportunity to grow knowledge and learnings around pig control techniques and technologies being used to implement the program.
- Caring for Country on Guwawenewa (Goat Island) – This project involves supporting the Quandamooka peoples through QYAC to undertake restoration on Guwawenewa (Goat Island) through weed removal and the regeneration of native plants. This work aims to protect and enhance the ecological and cultural values of the island. Project works are also benefitting habitat for shorebirds and other unique fauna found on this small coral cay.
- Healthy Land & Water/QYAC Memorandum of Understanding – Healthy Land & Water and QYAC have a longstanding relationship in working together towards achieving targets in the *SEQ NRM Plan*, amongst others, related to Quandamooka (Moreton Bay). The two groups have formalised their roles and responsibilities in an official Memorandum of Understanding.
- Fire Recovery Efforts post 2019/20 Bushfires – Increased engagement with First Nations peoples across the region has resulted in new relationships being established, capacity building opportunities, and improved understanding of ecological and cultural areas in fire affected landscapes.
- Healthy Land & Water's *Reconciliation Action Plan* – Healthy Land & Water's *Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)* reinforces the organisation's relationship and a broader commitment to enable respectful and appropriate inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the delivery of natural resource management activities and for equitable outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.

Many of these projects involve partnership with organisations and local governments. This portfolio of projects is actively growing due to the established and growing relationships between Healthy Land & Water staff and First Nations peoples.

## 4 Land use planning in South East Queensland

The *Planning Act 2016* is the first state-wide planning legislation in Australia to explicitly acknowledge the importance of valuing, protecting and promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, culture and tradition. This acknowledgement is further advanced and recognised in *ShapingSEQ* through ongoing engagement with representatives of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in South East Queensland (SEQ).

*ShapingSEQ* recognises both Traditional Owners and historical and contemporary residents as important stakeholders with differing needs and aspirations. *ShapingSEQ* aims to create sustainable communities where all members of the community have affordable and equitable access to places of wellbeing, community services, facilities, housing, education and employment.

## 5 The SEQ NRM Plan

The *South East Queensland Natural Resource Management Plan (SEQ NRM Plan)* is based on two guiding principles:

1. Recognition that all lands and other natural assets in the region form traditional First Nations peoples' landscapes and are maintained by various natural resource managers.
2. The natural environment supplies a range of goods and services. These goods and services are known as 'ecosystem services' and the preservation and management of these are essential for the region's response to climate change, long-term economic, social, cultural and environmental sustainability, and community quality of life.

### 5.1 Target for Traditional Owner knowledge and values:

Recognition of Traditional Owners as natural resource managers is one of the guiding principles of the *SEQ NRM Plan*. Traditional Owner knowledge and values maintained the region for millennia. A key activity will be to achieve active involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in community planning and decision making.

#### TO 1 – Traditional Owners

*By 2031, SEQ First Nations and their people will be resourced and leading natural resource managers, government, and non-government organisations in the management of Country including through the SEQ NRM Plan and the South East Aboriginal Traditional Cultural Resource Management Plan.*

Key interim target:

*By 2012, regional and sub-regional Traditional Owner groups and Indigenous organisations are resourced to coordinate involvement and investment to implement the SEQ NRM Plan.*

By 2012:

- i. 20% of SEQ Traditional Owners will be engaged in natural resource management policy, planning, education, training and working on Country.
- ii. 10% of the First Nations' workforce will be employed in natural resource management policy, planning, education, training and working on Country.

Over the last two decades First Nations representatives and associated stakeholders have informed the ongoing development of this target and have worked consistently to implement a wide range of activities. While changes in government and resultant changes in priorities and resourcing have impacted on the progress of the overarching target, the interim target has been significantly advanced.

## 6 Aspirations of First Nations' peoples

In 2008 the vision and supporting actions of the First Nations of South East Queensland (SEQ) were captured through SEQ Traditional Owner Land and Sea Management Alliance (SEQTOLSMA) and communicated in *Our Plan: The South East Queensland Traditional Owner Cultural Resources Management Plan*. Although the collective forum that facilitated the *Cultural Resource Management Plan* development is no longer operating, the aspirations, issues and priorities it champions are still relevant and inhabit current collaborative approaches to caring for Country. This has been confirmed through extensive dialogue with First Nations from across the region as part of the *SEQ NRM Plan* review process.

The vision as articulated in the *Cultural Resource Management Plan* is:

*Going forward to a future where our connection to SEQ Country is widely recognised and Traditional Owners are fully engaged and involved in cultural resource management decision-making processes and actions on and about our Country.*

Traditional Owners through the *Cultural Resource Management Plan* identified the following as key barriers to achieving the vision:

- Communication remains a major issue with engagement with Traditional Owner groups on matters of Country. It is not always consistent across SEQ or within governments. However, this is a two-way street with Traditional Owner groups recognising the need to also communicate better.
- Traditional Owner cultural values are not often reflected in engagement processes and **therefore aren't properly accounted for in management and planning documents**. Traditional Owners feel they do not have a consistently recognised place in land use planning processes at either the state or local government level. Traditional Owners often have no control over cultural information in the decision-making process.
- Government funds have not been consistently focused on community engagement including Indigenous engagement in recent years, and organisations have had to find other funding for this. The National Landcare Program (NLP) potentially allows for more engagement in the future.
- Land rights issues/recognition of sites including **women's/men's business**, sacred sites and cultural heritage sites. Governments and stakeholders rarely acknowledge these site considerations and values.
- Cultural values are not fully known for all lands therefore cannot properly accounted for in land and/or sea management planning.
- Protection of cultural values does not underpin management practices of many stakeholders in accordance with legislative requirements or the rights and interests of First Nations.
- Further education and awareness raising continues to be required in the broader community of Traditional Owner culture.
- Government and stakeholders often have false perceptions that Traditional Owners **don't have** capacity to manage land, and this is a systemic challenge.
- Local governments, despite planning legislation requiring the referral of development applications to Traditional Owner sites of cultural heritage value, rarely refer such applications on to recognised First Nations.
- First Nations have had negligible involvement in the development and review of key planning documents at the local government level over their Country.
- Cultural heritage monitoring often occurs without the appropriate oversight of recognised First Nations.

- Critical values of First Nations continue to degrade through inappropriate development and impacts of a changing climate resulting in the removal of culturally significant species and landscape values.<sup>14</sup>

The *SEQ NRM Plan* has provided Healthy Land & Water, government agencies, organisations and the community with the framework to work together to address many of these issues. These collaborations will continue and be enhanced in the updated *SEQ NRM Plan* and the continuing implementation of the actions it coordinates.

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<sup>14</sup> The Review and Update of the SEQ Traditional Owner Cultural Resource Management Plan - conducted as part of the Update of the SEQ Natural Resource Management Plan, SEQ Catchments, Brisbane.  
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# 7 Moving forward with an eye to the past

This report has affirmed that regional natural resource management planning in South East Queensland (SEQ) is based on a long and meaningful history of collaborating with First Nations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in acknowledging and integrating Indigenous values in planning and preserving cultural assets and landscapes.

This collaboration is ongoing through governance arrangements embedded in regional body representation and Memorandums of Understanding with First Nations groups for the purposes of achieving natural resource management targets.

The reinstatement of the SEQ Traditional Owners Planning Forum is a critical delivery mechanism of the SEQ Regional Plan, *ShapingSEQ* (see Appendix A for a description of the Forum), for First Nations integration of ecological knowledge within planning. The Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning (DSDMIP) provided secretarial support for the Forum as part of advancing the purposes of the *Planning Act* to value, protect and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, culture and tradition. This is delivered and coordinated in collaboration with Healthy Land & Water.

See Appendix B for an example of the initiatives the Forum has and continues to work on related to traditional ecological knowledge.

The Forum is an innovative and unique initiative that provides the opportunity to reap mutual benefits for all parties in the maintenance of the cultural, economic, physical and social wellbeing of people and communities. Its continuation will also help achieve the objective of the Queensland **Government's Planning Act** for a transparent land use planning and development assessment system that has policy making and assessment processes that are highly visible and legible to the community and users of the system.

The Reconciliation Action Plans finalised by a range of organisations operating in SEQ also provides further commitment and energy to foster and maintain respectful, trusting and mutually beneficial relationships that can achieve the collective aspirations of First Nations peoples and Reconciliation Action Plan sponsors.

This collection of mechanisms, and the emerging Treaty policy advancements across Queensland will provide further opportunities to facilitate the incorporation of traditional ecological knowledge where appropriate in natural resource management plans and the planning framework more generally. The activation of these mechanisms must accord with agreed protocols and ensure prior approval of the Indigenous custodians of the knowledge as to how and when this knowledge is used and how intellectual property rights are upheld.

It is envisioned that Healthy Land & Water's work with government and other agencies and organisations will further progress First Nations aspirations (with the SEQ Planning Forum and the *SEQ NRM Plan* recognised by many First Nations as key delivery mechanisms).

This work has and continues to help facilitate the respectful and appropriate inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the delivery of natural resource management activities and for equitable outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.



# 8 Appendices

## 8.1 Appendix A: SEQ Traditional Owners Planning Forum Terms of Reference

### 1. Purpose

These terms of reference define the purpose, role and method of operation of the SEQ Traditional Owners Planning and Advisory Forum (the Forum) to guide participants as we work together towards enhancing the recognition of Indigenous values and knowledge in planning for the region.

The Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning (the Department) and Healthy Land & Water have agreed to a joint approach to the forum recognising the importance of the aspirations and alignment of intent of both organisations to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in South East Queensland (SEQ). These organisations recognise the importance and value of a close working relationship with Traditional Owners in the region. For this reason, the Forum will advise the Department and Healthy Land & Water on planning matters and matters surrounding natural resource management.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been active participants in the statutory regional planning program in SEQ since its inception in 2005 and in the regional natural resource management planning and implementation program since 2002. They have expressed a desire to increase this involvement during the implementation of *ShapingSEQ: South East Queensland Regional Plan 2017* and on many occasions during the development and implementation of the *South East Queensland Natural Resource Management Plan (SEQ NRM Plan)*.

### Planning

The recognition of the importance of valuing, protecting and promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, culture and tradition in planning is acknowledged in the *Planning Act (2016)* (the Act); the first planning legislation in Australia to explicitly promote this outcome.

The Act is advanced by regional strategies in *ShapingSEQ* that aim to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are engaged and their culture is respected and reflected in planning for the region.

This also reflects the Queensland Government's commitment to a just and reconciled Queensland, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are valued, respected and affirmed across all areas of society.

### Natural resource management

The *SEQ NRM Plan* sets out the natural asset targets, initiatives and pathways to achieve balance between nature and people in SEQ. Healthy Land & Water understands and appreciates that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been achieving this balance for over 40,000 years. The *SEQ NRM Plan* and subsequent actions have strongly recognised the need to involve Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in looking after Country and its people.

These outcomes require Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the Department and Healthy Land & Water to work together to understand each other's objectives, culture and aspirations.

The Forum provides the Department and Healthy Land & Water with the means to actively facilitate an ongoing conversation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that will nurture this relationship to enhance the integration of Indigenous values in planning.

### 2. Forum participants

For the purposes of progressing the Act in SEQ, the Department has recognised Traditional Owners as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have provided evidence that they have a connection to their land and sea country under the systems of traditional law and custom.

'Connection' evidence can include genealogical research, cultural mapping and the analysis of laws, customs and language. Queensland South Native Title Services (QSNTS) has coordinated research to provide this evidence in SEQ.

Map 1 shows the Traditional Owner groups in SEQ that have been recognised as a result of this research.

The Department and Healthy Land & Water have worked with QSNTS to invite representatives from these groups to establish a network for consultation on planning and natural resource management matters in SEQ.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in SEQ includes Traditional Owners and those who have moved to the region (historical and contemporary residents). The forum will proceed mindful of the socio-economic needs of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and engage historical and contemporary Indigenous residents as required.

Observers will include a representative from QSNTS and staff from the Department, other state agencies and Healthy Land & Water where their involvement advances the aims or operation of the Forum.

**Map 1 - Traditional Owner Groups**

ShapingSEQ - 9 June 2017



### 3. Aim

The Forum aims to build the capacity of the Department, Healthy Land & Water and Traditional Owners to recognise and reflect Indigenous values and aspirations in planning policies, programs and services and natural resource management in a more coordinated and integrated way.

The Forum will allow the Department and the Healthy Land & Water Board and Executive to work with Traditional Owners on matters of planning and natural resource management related to the management of traditional land and sea Country.

### 4. Role

The role of the Forum is as follows:

- Discuss and provide feedback to the Department when policies are being considered that may affect the interests of Traditional Owners in SEQ.
- Provide a clear and direct communication channel between the Department and Traditional Owners regarding the planning framework in SEQ.
- Assist the Department and Traditional Owners to increase the understanding of each other's goals, culture and aspirations, and enhance capacity to work together effectively in SEQ.
- Support the Department with advice that will embed Traditional Owners interests more strongly within the planning system as it relates to SEQ.
- Provide advice on the implementation of *ShapingSEQ* to enable regional planning to support the aspirations of Traditional Owners in SEQ.
- Provide advice and input into the *SEQ NRM Plan* as required.
- Provide advice on the Healthy Land & Water Indigenous Engagement Framework.
- Provide advice on ways Healthy Land & Water can better reconcile with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Assist Healthy Land & Water to better connect with and understand traditional knowledge as it relates to land, water and biodiversity.
- Assist Healthy Land & Water to better involve Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in its projects, programs and outcomes.

The Forum provides advice to the Department's Planning Group to support the advancement of the Planning Act and *ShapingSEQ* as illustrated in Figure 1.

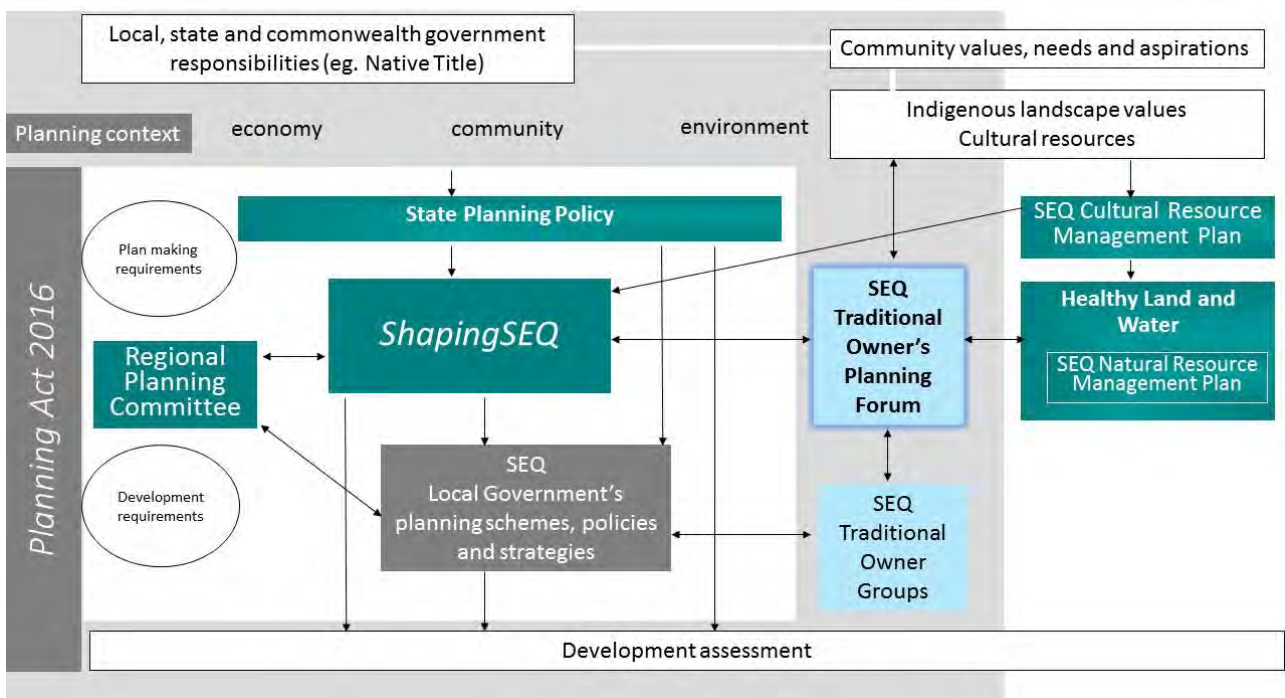


Figure 1: SEQ Traditional Owners Planning Forum and the Queensland Planning Framework.

## 5. Meeting Procedures

### 5.1 Frequency

The Forum will aim to meet six monthly or as prompted by the planning program timeline and natural resource management needs (maximum twice a year). Other workshops, capacity building events and knowledge sharing processes may occur as required.

### 5.2 Notice of forums

As far as practicable, notice of forums and the agenda will be available one month in advance of the meeting. Other supporting material to be provided as it becomes available.

### 5.3 Decision making powers of the group

The Forum is not a decision-making group.

The Forum will be an advisory body that progresses the goals and aspirations of Traditional Owners, the Department and Healthy Land & Water through the sharing of knowledge and information for better planning and natural resource management outcomes in SEQ.

### 5.4 Facilitation of meetings

An independent facilitator will co-facilitate the Forum with a nominated officer from the Department and Healthy Land & Water for their respective agenda components.

### 5.5 Secretariat

Secretariat support services will be provided by Planning Group, DSDMIP in collaboration with Healthy Land & Water including to:

- Prepare meeting agendas and supporting papers.
- Prepare meeting minutes, notes and information.
- Provide updates across Planning Group, Healthy Land & Water and other meetings as requested.
- Record actions from meetings and organise distribution to participants.

The Planning Group and Healthy Land & Water will propose issues/opportunities related to planning and natural resource management that the forum may wish to discuss and representatives from the department and Healthy Land & Water would be expected to attend as required.

### 5.6 Venues and attendance fees

The Department in collaboration with Healthy Land & Water will organise a venue for each forum with a preference for a central location in the region that is easily accessed, close to ground level and near public transport.

Attendance fees are not available for participants (assistance with the costs of travel to forum venues will be considered).

## 6.0 Review

These terms of reference to be reviewed annually or as required.

## 8.2 Appendix B: SEQ Traditional Owners Planning Forum Action Plan 2018

What we discussed at the forum	Actions from the discussion
<b>General</b>	
The Department raised the idea of university students attending future Forums, to gain an insight into the issues and opportunities being discussed.	There was strong support from participants for students to attend future Forums. The department will contact universities to progress this.
Venue options for the Forum were discussed with participants, including the option of holding forums on Country in different areas of the Goori Murri Nation/SEQ.	There was general agreement from participants that the Park Regis is a suitable, central and neutral venue for the next Forum.
The Department raised the idea of engaging an Indigenous facilitator for future Forums.	Participants voiced the importance of knowing the facilitator and their background.  The Department will engage an Indigenous facilitator for future Forums and will continue to seek feedback from participants on the format and content of Forums.
Participants voiced the importance of acknowledging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in urban design and providing places to connect to Country. The changes in the demographics of towns and cities often results in Traditional Owners feeling further marginalised while other more recent arrived cultures are promoted.	As part of best practice engagement, investigate how planning can recognise Indigenous cultural elements to inform the design of urban spaces i.e. parks and public areas etc.
The Department provided an introduction and overview of City Deals, and the potential SEQ City Deal. Participants were asked if they were interested in knowing more about City Deals and any opportunities to get involved early to influence the City Deal for SEQ. There is an opportunity to include an Indigenous component.	Participants voiced interest in knowing more and the opportunity to be involved to influence the potential City Deal for SEQ.  The Department will provide further information at the next Forum, following discussion with the City Deal team in state government.
<b>Draft Terms of Reference</b>	
Participants were provided with the updated draft Terms of Reference for review.  The draft Terms of Reference includes Healthy Land & Water input, to reflect their ongoing role in the forums.	Participants will review the draft Terms of Reference, and confirm endorsement for these to be finalised.  Terms of reference to be reviewed each year.
<b>Healthy Land and Water</b>	
Participants raised the issue of accountability for state forestry, particularly under the 'bushland' target in the SEQ NRM Plan.	Healthy Land & Water to discuss the issue of fire management in state forests with the Queensland Fire and Biodiversity Consortium (QFBC).
Participants noted the opportunities and benefits of education programs with school students on Indigenous areas and interests.	Participants voiced support for students to attend future forums.  Healthy Land & Water will seek to engage Indigenous groups and students on projects throughout the area.
Participants voiced the need for requirements under the SEQ NRM Plan, and other plans and policies, to be legislated. Without	Healthy Land & Water to provide details of the review of the SEQ NRM Plan and

<p>being legislated, it is difficult to achieve the outcomes and goals under these plans.</p>	<p>consider a workshop with participants to obtain input to the review.</p>
<p>QSNTS noted that an implementation and engagement program is included under Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs), to support the agreement.</p>	<p>Participants supported the opportunity for a presentation on ILUAs from Kevin Smith (QSNTS) at a future Forum.</p>
<p>Role of mapping</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Department presented a concept option to use mapping as a communication tool to inform planning processes under the <i>Planning Act</i>.</li> <li>• The mapping concept is proposed to be a communication tool rather than a development assessment tool.</li> <li>• The Terrain Natural Resource Management mapping was presented to demonstrate a concept that could be applied to SEQ, for the purpose of Indigenous engagement.</li> <li>• Any mapping would be available in a central location, publicly available and user-friendly.</li> <li>• The Department noted that any mapping was not proposed to be compulsory or exhaustive. Each group would have to agree for their interests to be identified on the mapping. The mapping would be a 'living' tool and would be continually updated, as required.</li> <li>• Participants were asked what activities and/or types of development they would want to be consulted on. Also, what information they would like displayed on the map.</li> <li>• There is the potential for the mapping of ecological values to link to the <i>SEQ NRM Plan</i> targets.</li> </ul>	<p>There was general support from participants for the mapping concept discussed.</p> <p>The role of mapping was acknowledged as a step in the right direction as part of best practice engagement.</p> <p>The Department will continue to explore the use of potential spatial identifiers for areas of cultural significance that could be included on the <b>state's online mapping tool</b>.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants voiced the importance of identifying significant places and areas, and ensuring engagement early in the process to ensure their interests are recognised.</li> <li>• Participants expressed the need to ask all Traditional Owners in the area whether they want to be involved. Each group should be asked what they want to show on the mapping.</li> <li>• The mapping and input requirements would need to be manageable for groups. Many groups are volunteer based so time and resources are limited.</li> <li>• Participants voiced the need to focus on more than just meeting the minimum requirements for consultation and engagement.</li> <li>• Participants voiced the need for support from the Minister for Local Government, and the importance of support and knowledge from local cultural officers and council staff.</li> <li>• Participants highlighted the importance of coordination across all government departments. The state government needs to lead by example; internal communication within state and local governments needs to improve.</li> <li>• Participants voiced concern over how local government and the community would be held to the mapping requirements and information. Implementation of the mapping is key to its success.</li> <li>• Participants highlighted that the mapping needs to be easy to access, use and understand. This will minimise excuses as to <b>why people didn't/couldn't engage with Traditional Owners</b>.</li> </ul>	



This document has been prepared by Healthy Land & Water

As the leading Natural Resource Management (NRM) body for the region, Healthy Land & Water is responsible for coordinating the review and maintenance of, and making publicly available the region's natural resource management plan.

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