

Comments on the Mission Beach Habitat Network Action Plan Draft

Mission Beach Community Association general comments

(in no specific order of significance)

1. Concerns that the report will not lead to tangible, quantifiable outcomes

The main concern for the Mission Beach Community Association is that after several years of concerted effort and much research, little will become of the recommendations outlined in the plan. Most of the document reads as a fine academic piece but to quote the summary: “Habitat and cassowary conservation values at Mission Beach have effectively declined over recent years despite a raft of plans and community efforts – implementation has not been supported by a sufficient level of investment”.

2. Collation of a broad range of strategies in one document commendable

The Mission Beach Community Association commends Terrain for collating such a broad range of strategies in one document. Whilst it is recognized that most of the strategies had already been identified in other documents, MBCA does not know of any other single document that has brought these strategies together.

This document seems to be largely an academic exercise which may prove very useful in attracting funding for additional research.

3. Length of time in development

The MBCA has on previous occasions commented on community frustration with the length of time taken to provide feedback to the community about the outcomes of their workshop participation. The process in developing the MBHNAP has been frustratingly slow.

4. The need for a consistent approach

The linguistic style of the document is inconsistent with highly technical terminology and good scientific writing followed by unquantified vague comments regarding the progress to date on implementation. Examples are as follows:

.. The reference to the Wongaling Habitat Linkages lacks any hard numbers such as number of landholders contacted, number responding and actual physical outcomes such as how many properties now have nature covenants placed on them as a result of the initiative.

.. The section on Motoring Mechanisms (p.57) states that outcomes should be stated in hectares planted, MOUs, covenants, etc. However, this is not reflected in the document advocating such measures.

.. Reference to the revegetation projects is similarly vague. There is a lack of facts provided regarding the quantifiable increase in habitat measured in hectares as a result of the intervention. It is unclear how any of the revegetation programs were conducted prior to the intervention of MBHNAP and which was the direct result of MBHNAP incentives.

.. Jargon has been used in terms such as the Mission Beach Collaborative Habitat Investment Atlas.

5. Feedback to the community

There have been mixed comments regarding the means of feedback to the community. Many community members have reportedly not seen the flyer which it is understood was sent to every household. It is unlikely that many community members would have the time or capacity to critically interpret the document.

The feedback form was problematic in several respects. For example, it made no distinction between a report and a project. Since a report does not constitute a project to the community, it would have been better to separate out the reports listed from the actual actions on the ground.

6. Specific comments on the strategies

6.1 Habitat protection (p.29)

1.2.1 The statement about no clearing in future is unrealistic and unattainable.

1.3.1 The National Reserve System target figures of 2000 hectares need to be included. It is unclear whether this is over the entire Wet Tropics.

2.1.3 The statement, "Council rate incentives are not available and will not be available in the future," needs clarification.

6.2 Traffic (p.33)

1.1.4 There are several contradictions to the strategy of removing objects that restrict vision including roadside vegetation.

It is unclear what constitutes "safe corridor principles" in Traffic Project 1. Some of the traffic calming solutions documented appear to be for much higher road usage – eg the installation of elevated roadways and roundabouts along Cassowary Drive.

6.3. Exotic species (p.35)

1.1.1 There is little point in banning dogs and cats from new developments when the development neighbours are permitted to own both dogs and cats.

A map detailing the areas in which all dogs and cats should be restricted needs to be produced. The map should be distributed to the community to ensure that all dog and cat owners are made aware that their properties fall within the target areas and appropriate control measures need to be put in place.

6.4 Agricultural management (p.37)

1.2 The need for assistance in planting water purification rafts in creeks and on creek and river banks needs to be added. Sterile grasses such as vetiver and phragmites australis etc have been used extensively in Europe and Asia to successfully eliminate toxic waste from water.

6.5 Residential and infrastructure management (p.41)

2.1. The deletion of “No McDonalds” is suggested with the inclusion of something less targeted. Whilst this may have been raised, it may not be lawful to promote restricted commercial practice of a multinational corporation.

6.6 Tourism management (P.43)

2.1.4 It is necessary to ensure that safe food handling requirements are met by all food vendors.

6.7 Progress on each of the strategies (p.48)

Differentiation needs to be made between the reports and the actual hands-on projects. The reader is not informed about whether “Council Managed Reserves Clump Point” is a report, flyer, revegetation project or whatever.

6.8 Incentives (p.49)

Wongaling Habitat Linkages Project

This section lacks any quantifiable data on outcomes. It would be useful to include how many letters were sent, how many land holders responded, how many have actually taken any action and what that action was as a result of the intervention. People would like to know what happened as a result of the effort involved.

6.9 Mission Beach Revegetation projects

This section is vague in terms of quantifiable data. The document’s earlier recommendation that all outcomes be measured in hectares & facts has not been adhered to here. Suggestions for specific details needing inclusion are as follows: What area of land is covered by the 1000s of trees? How many hectares have been revegetated? Which of those were actually as a result of the MBHNAP intervention?