

# A new plan

The state government's 2031 FNO Regional Plan, previously known as the Draft 2025 FNO Regional Plan, has now been released.

There have been changes made, but not to the essentials.

The 60 hectare rural minimum size and the urban footprint (meaning development essentially confined to lines drawn on a map) remain.

However the proposed densities of development have been relaxed; realignment of rural boundaries will now be permitted within strict guidelines and eco-tourism ventures without a permanent residential component are allowed outside the urban footprint.

These changes were pursued in many submissions, including those from the Cassowary Coast Regional Council and councillors and they are welcomed.

I was especially pleased to see the tight population densities relaxed.

Minimum sized block developments, with houses almost touching the eaves of the next door neighbour, are not appropriate for regional areas.

One of the reasons people choose to stay or to move here is the freedom and life style that extra space brings, without tight space constraints.

Some light industrial development outside the urban footprint is now allowed, up to 250 square metres.

Last year such a proposed development was rejected by council and this decision is now able to be reversed.

The plan clearly states that the central business districts of Tully and Innisfail are to be retained as such.

This may have ramifications on any development of satellite shopping facilities that could fragment the importance of the established town centres.

We need growth in order to provide opportunities for our youth and to lessen the burden of infrastructure costs.

I don't like and don't accept this plan's prediction that in 22 years our population across the whole Cassowary Coast Region will only increase by 150 persons each year, on average.

The state government apparently expects that our population will barely increase (only by 3,000 people) between now and 2031!

The recognition of the potential of Mourilyan Port is welcome, as is the future development of Innisfail as a transport hub for the region based on this port and the Palmerston Highway - the best road to the Tablelands.

Overdue recognition comes to Jumbun and Mena Creek as important villages, the Mundoo Airport and to plantation forestry, which is now recognised as a form of agriculture.

Other welcome changes include the recognition that connectivity between habitat areas for wildlife movement is important for resilience and bio-diversity, especially following a disruption such as a cyclone and for avoidance of in-breeding.

Looking at the region's areas and growth potential: \* Tully - the enlarged urban footprint as in the draft plan has been retained, so Tully has good opportunities for expansion.

\* Innisfail - extensive development areas not available, largely constrained by flood issues. There are many applications predating the plan.

\* Wangan/Mundoo/Mourilyan/South Johnstone - available for both residential and industrial growth

\* Cardwell - essentially constrained to the existing township area, with negotiation needed with state owned forestry before expansion is possible to the west - not replanted (meaning a 20 year tree cycle wait), which is not good news for Cardwell's growth

\* Mission Beach - new opportunities substantially restricted but there are many development applications already in the system that pre-date these new state planning controls.

The Cardwell Shire Council Plan was developed in 2007 and the Johnstone Shire Council Plan in 2005. Both are relatively recent and not ordinarily due for renewal.

They need to be re-written post amalgamation and now to incorporate the over-riding state regional plan. This will become another of council's priorities.