

Together we will create our...



BOLD FUTURE – Trends and issues

Our environmental future

The Gold Coast is one of the most beautiful and naturally diverse places in Australia. Residents and visitors to the Gold Coast have always been able to enjoy a wide range of truly stunning natural areas including beaches and coastal dunes, wetlands, waterways and hinterland rainforest. However, the environmental values that we appreciate are increasingly threatened.

As residents and visitors who benefit from these natural assets, we have a responsibility to ensure that they are protected and enhanced for future generations.

To conserve and enhance the Gold Coast's natural values we need to avoid:

- loses of habitat and biodiversity
- declines in water and air quality
- changes to natural fire regimes
- waste and pollution
- the introduction of weeds and exotic animals

Trends and issues

Increasing pressure is being placed on natural environments worldwide due to global issues such as population growth, climate change and urban expansion.

At a local level, population growth is placing increased pressure on the Gold Coast's natural assets.

A short term impact of urban development is the fragmentation and degradation of habitat. These impacts affect the ecological viability and health of natural areas especially within urban areas. The retention and re-establishment of networks and corridors to link and buffer natural areas is, and will be, critical.

Initiatives that integrate urban development and conservation are also important and need to be encouraged. Practices such as water sensitive urban design, native landscaping, the integration of natural features and sustainable housing help to reduce negative impacts.

We need to minimise the impact of soil erosion and acid sulphate soils on our waterways and their ecology by employing creative and sustainable development practices.

Urban expansion has led to an increase in the levels of waste and pollutants generated by our city. Landfills, if not properly controlled, can significantly degrade the environment and represent a threat to human health. In future we need to adopt more sustainable waste disposal technologies and move towards higher levels of recycling.



The management of waste is fundamental to the health of the city's environment and failure to manage waste appropriately uses up valuable land and ultimately results in the degradation and impairment of our natural systems.

With the destruction and deterioration of our natural environment, the important role that these systems play in providing clean air and water is compromised. For example, the loss of catchment and riparian vegetation can lead to further environmental degradation, adversely affecting water quality. This can lead to increasing cost of treatment and higher health risks posed by the escalation in pollutant levels.

The natural environment is one of Gold Coast City's most important lifestyle attributes and plays a significant role in attracting visitors and residents to the region. For this to continue, we need to maintain and improve nature-based recreation opportunities in the city, keep our waterways and marine areas safe and clean and make sure that our air remains healthy and free from pollution. Maintaining healthy and functional natural systems will help to achieve these goals.

Making sure people remain aware of the city's natural assets is important also, because of the need for the community to be involved and work together to protect and conserve our environment.

Leadership and strategic planning is crucial in the challenging issues of:

- increasing development pressures
- increasing affluence and higher waste output
- climate change
- sea level rise
- further biodiversity loss and habitat fragmentation
- new and changing legislation and policy
- environmental offsets
- community engagement, education and awareness
- carbon trading opportunities
- demand for nature-based recreation
- increasing cost of managing natural areas
- maintaining air and water quality

Before we can fully address the issues affecting the Gold Coast's environmental future, we need a clear and collaborative vision as to what that future should be.



Rubbish for landfill

Make sure your voice is heard

Do you think the Gold Coast has a healthy environment? How can you tell?

How important are our city's natural assets? Why?

What should the community and Council be doing to improve our city's air and water quality?

How can we reduce waste?

What activities (recreational and economic) should be allowed in natural areas?

How can we have a healthy environment in the future?

Where should conservation efforts be focused (eg. urban or rural, hinterland or coastal)?



"You look at that river gently flowing by. You notice the leaves rustling with the wind. You hear the birds; you hear the tree frogs. In the distance you hear a cow. You feel the grass. The mud gives a little bit on the river bank. It's quiet; it's peaceful. And all of a sudden, it's a gear shift inside you. And it's like taking a deep breath and going, "Oh yeah, I forgot about this."

Al Gore in the opening monologue of *An Inconvenient Truth*

"We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children."

Native American Proverb

"For 200 years we've been conquering Nature. Now we're beating it to death."

Tom McMillan, quoted in Francesca Lyman, *The Greenhouse Trap*, 1990

"I believe our biggest issue is the same as the biggest issue that the whole world is facing and that's habitat destruction."

Steve Irwin