

Regional Climate Action Roadmap

Creating our climate ready future

Noosa and Sunshine Coast Councils respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the coastal plains and hinterlands of the Noosa and Sunshine Coast regions, the Kabi Kabi (Gubbi Gubbi) and Jinibara peoples. We pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.



Statement of Intent

Noosa and Sunshine Coast Councils recognise that the climate is changing and that an urgent response is required.

We are committed to understanding the current and emerging risks and taking the necessary action to adjust our way of life to the changes that will continue to happen.

In our response, we actively seek to maximise the opportunities and deliver creative solutions. We recognise the benefits of working together through diverse and inclusive partnerships.

We commit to partner with Kabi Kabi and Jinibara First Nations People in shaping our response to help us live in balance with Earth's changing systems through their custodianship, connection and deep knowledge of Country.

A leading response is necessary to ensure we are protecting and enhancing our region for both current and future generations.



A shared responsibility

This Regional Climate Action Roadmap outlines a way forward for our collaborative partnership as Councils, and our commitment to working with the community, key sectors, and other levels of government to build our shared vision of a climate-ready region. This Roadmap is the start of a longer journey to collaboratively address climate change across the Sunshine Coast region.

As Councils, we have a key role to play in addressing climate change by ensuring that the services we provide are resilient to more frequent and extreme events and trends. We also have a responsibility to reduce our carbon emissions to reduce the changes in climate that are causing these hazards to be more frequent and extreme.

The impacts of climate change in our region cannot be tackled by Councils alone - it is a shared responsibility across all sectors of the community. There is an ongoing need for all levels of government to provide leadership and support for our community to reduce their

emissions, prepare for our changing climate, and be more resilient when hazards happen. Our key sectors, from the built environment and infrastructure, to tourism, agribusiness, community services and environment, need to reduce their emissions and prepare their own organisations for these hazards too. As individuals and members of our community, we have a responsibility to reduce our emissions, consider our own readiness, be informed, understand the consequences and support our neighbours and communities to appropriately respond to climate hazards.

We acknowledge that not everyone is equally capable of preparing for, coping with, or appropriately responding to, extreme climatic hazards. We also recognise that low emissions technologies may not be affordable or accessible for everyone within our community. As Councils, we will ensure that we consider the vulnerability of our communities and advocate for the extra support people need to ensure they do not get left behind in our climate readiness journey.

Focus areas for creating a climate ready region



1.
Building climate ready councils



2.
Empowering climate ready communities



3.
Advocating for a climate ready region

Our regional climate challenges and opportunities

Climate change is bringing more frequent and extreme climate hazards to our region - rain, storms, flooding, sea level rise, storm surges, droughts, heatwaves and bushfires. Some of these happen fast, whilst others unfold slowly. Whilst our community has experienced many of these hazards before, it is the increasing severity and frequency of these hazards, in close succession, that will result in rising impacts on our region.

The places we live, work and play were not planned with this severity or frequency of climate hazards in mind. Our region also attracts many new residents each year, who are not familiar with local climatic hazards. Now is the time to assess what assets, activities and people will be exposed to these hazards, and to consider whether there are changes we can make to our residences, workplaces, recreation areas and community spaces, and the way we run our activities, organisations and businesses, to prevent or at least minimise the impacts.

Many of the changes we need to make to prepare for climate change impacts can bring other benefits too. They can bring opportunities to build the economic vibrancy of our region, strengthen our community capital, and support healthy environments and landscapes. At their heart, these changes improve human health and wellbeing, making our places more liveable, attractive and valuable. New business and employment opportunities can arise from developing innovative solutions to climate challenges, emissions reductions initiatives and resource efficiencies.

What we learnt

The development of this roadmap included engagement with staff within both Noosa and Sunshine Coast Councils, a community survey, and initial workshops with local leaders from our region's key sectors. Both Councils have undertaken a range of important work on climate change prior to this project, which provided us with a strong foundation to take a deeper look at our Council and regional risks.



Looking inwards

As part of our initial collaboration, conversations were held with council staff from across a range of different service areas about the risks from a changing climate. This spans staff from waste management to transport, from parks and gardens to community development, from people and culture to economic development, and from environmental operations to planning and development.

The message is clear: our Councils are already experiencing impacts from a changing climate. Staff anticipate the impacts will be further exacerbated as hazards become increasingly frequent and severe. Whilst many of these impacts are specific to individual service areas, there are some common impact themes that emerged.

Our people

Our workforce is being disrupted when climate hazards happen, especially during or after other events such as the COVID pandemic. Some of our staff are impacted personally, some can't get to work, and others are helping their communities respond. More frequent and severe events are putting greater demands on our staff and services, for example, to provide and manage cool spaces as refuges from heat. Many of our staff also work outdoors, which places them at higher risk of personal harm, and the productivity of all our staff is impacted through heatwaves. These and other staffing issues will make it increasingly difficult to run our services as normal. Therefore, how we respond to these disruptions, and the provision of adequate resources required to do so, remains an important issue to address.

Our assets

Council assets can be damaged by rapid and severe hazards such as storms and bushfires, but they are also impacted by slow and chronic hazards such as drought and heat. For example, the landscape and character values provided by our prized parks and gardens, streetscapes and recreation

areas are impacted in drought, and our transportation infrastructure can be damaged in extreme heat. In the short term, this means we may have to cease some of our services, and in the longer term it will lead to higher costs for us as Councils – in increased repairs, maintenance and replacements, associated with reduced asset life, and rising insurance costs.

Our services

We rely on electricity, water, waste, telecommunications and transport infrastructure ('critical infrastructure') to provide services. More severe and frequent climate hazards are causing this critical infrastructure to fail more often. Occasional, short disruptions can be managed through our business continuity planning process, but we are not yet prepared for the 'new normal' of repeated and longer disruptions that are likely to occur with a changing climate.

We also rely on a wide range of other suppliers to run our operations and provide services. The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us that hazards elsewhere can disrupt our supplies. We are exposed to global supply chain issues that arise from climate hazards, just like other organisations.

Our community

As Councils, we play a unique role in supporting the wellbeing of our community, our vibrant local economy, and our healthy environment through the provision of our services. Our staff are aware that our ability to maintain exceptional service provision is foundational to the success of our region, and when our services are compromised, it has flow-on impacts. Our planning and development choices also leave a long-term legacy for our region. There is more we need to understand about our changing climate, especially increasing temperatures, to support our region's climate resilience.

Looking outwards

We have started a conversation with leaders from key sectors about the impacts to local organisations and the communities they support and serve. We sought perspectives from sectors as diverse as built environment and infrastructure to not-for-profits and community outreach groups, from the small and medium business sector to our leading education and health institutions, and from natural resource management groups to youth representatives.

Overwhelmingly, our local leaders told us that the mental health and wellbeing of our communities is at risk from the compounding stresses that arise from a changing climate. They reminded us that people don't compartmentalise impacts from climate change – everything comes together at a personal level.

Our local leaders urged us to take a big picture view and pursue transformative action, to acknowledge and respond to the urgency of this issue. Likewise, youth leaders from across the region stressed the urgency of taking action to protect their future and expressed the position that everyone has the power and responsibility to make change. The regional youth see

protecting the environment as inherently linked with protecting human wellbeing, and the wellbeing of future generations, feeling that we are strongest as a community with the shared goal of caring for Country.

We witness impacts to the places we value so much, from our beaches to our sub-tropical gardens, from our favourite national parks to our turtle nesting places. We experience disruption to our livelihoods, especially for the many small and medium business owners and employees in sectors such as tourism, retail and construction across our region. We struggle to juggle family, work, and caring responsibilities when climate hazards happen.

Our community groups and not-for-profit organisations do their best to support us, but are reliant on volunteers and limited budgets, and are not well prepared for the loss of critical infrastructure such as electricity, water, telecommunications that often occurs with climate hazards.

- Sentiments from the workshops with local leaders



Creating a climate ready region

Both Noosa and Sunshine Coast Councils have been on their respective journeys to respond to climate change for a number of years through policy, planning and on- ground delivery. The following focus areas have been identified as our next steps to build a climate ready region. In addition to the following focus areas below, each Council has additional priorities that will be pursued independently.



Building climate ready councils

We acknowledge that building the resilience of our own services to climate hazards is a core responsibility. Whilst each Council operates as a separate organisation, there are significant benefits from us working together to understand our climate risks and identify opportunities for improved services that deliver better outcomes.



Empowering climate ready communities

Preparing for a changing climate is everyone's responsibility, but everyone needs the motivations, resources and skills to enable them to prepare. We will continue to lead and support our community to meet their shared responsibilities in building a climate ready region.



Advocating for a climate ready region

Some of our major local climate risks are created by decisions outside our region and outside the direct control of our Councils. We will leverage our regional alliances to advocate for changes to State and Federal government legislation and policies that exacerbate our local climate risks, and for improved funding for our regional climate change response.





Building climate ready councils

Focus Areas

1. Identify shared opportunities to develop the capacity and skills of our people to understand and respond to climate change in their work, through regional training and development opportunities.
2. Investigate requirements to support council staff's wellbeing and build our workforce's climate resilience. We will explore the impacts of a changing climate on our staff and take proactive steps to improve our workforce planning to protect their physical and mental health.
3. Strengthen regional collaborations for climate and disaster projects and partnerships, acknowledging that climate hazards do not respect Council boundaries.
4. Actively pursue grant opportunities to unpack cascading and compounding impacts to Council services from failure of electricity, water, waste, telecommunications and transport ('critical infrastructure'), identified as a key climate risk from the first phase of our collaboration.



Empowering climate ready communities

Focus Areas

1. Partner with First Nations Peoples, recognising the unique knowledge of the Kabi Kabi and Jinibara people and their enduring stewardship of country to ensure their needs are recognised and their distinctive contributions are valued in our regional response to climate change.
2. Continue to engage with the community and further develop our communication and engagement tools to increase community involvement in regional climate change decision-making.
3. Encourage and facilitate new regional partnerships to foster experimentation and innovation, and to find opportunities to strengthen us as a region of choice. We will facilitate the sharing of information, resources, tools and approaches through trusted local community and professional networks.

Advocating for a climate ready region

Focus Areas

1. Prioritise our collective climate response advocacy efforts to ensure a comprehensive and integrated approach.
2. Use the collective voice of Sunshine Coast and Noosa Councils and regional alliances including the South-East Queensland Council of Mayors, the Local Government Association of Queensland, the Queensland Climate Resilient Councils, and the Cities Power Partnership, to advocate for the funding and resources needed to effectively respond to climate change.
3. Advance regional alliances with key sectors to advocate to State and Federal governments for the legislative and policy changes needed to accelerate the delivery of innovative, transformational action to build Australia's most climate ready region. This could include more climate resilient planning frameworks and building codes, better funding for climate resilient initiatives, and policies that incentivise emissions reductions.





Important terms

The following definitions have been sourced from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the CSIRO and the UK Met Office. They have been simplified to suit the context and intended audience of this Roadmap document.

Climate change: a large-scale, long-term shift in average weather patterns across the world as a result of human activities.

Climate hazard: Climate-related physical events or trends that may cause loss of life, injury, or other health impacts, as well as damage and loss to property, infrastructure, livelihoods, service provision, ecosystems and environmental resources. Hazards can include an increased frequency and intensity in heatwaves, droughts, temperatures, fire weather, heavy rainfall, sea level rise, storms, coastal erosion and flooding, amongst others.

Climate impacts: The effects of climate change on lives, livelihoods, health, ecosystems, economies, societies, cultures, services, and infrastructure. This includes cascading impacts (where one impact triggers multiple others in a proliferation or snowball effect of interactions) and compounding impacts (where two or more impacts occur concurrently to increase the overall severity of impacts). Examples

include: water insecurity; declining agricultural productivity; increasing infectious diseases, displacement and mental health problems; damages to infrastructure and key economic sectors; and changes in ecosystem structure and functioning, amongst others.

Climate risk: The potential for adverse consequences resulting from climate change impacts. Risk results from the interaction of vulnerability, exposure, and hazard.

Exposure: The presence of people, livelihoods, species or ecosystems, environmental functions, services, and resources, infrastructure, or economic, social or cultural assets in places and settings that could be adversely affected.

Resilience: The capacity of social, economic and environmental systems to cope with a climate hazard or disturbance, responding or reorganising in ways that maintain their essential function, identity and structure, while also maintaining the capacity for adaptation, learning and transformation.

Vulnerability: The propensity or predisposition to be adversely affected. Vulnerability encompasses a variety of concepts and elements including sensitivity or susceptibility to harm and lack of capacity to cope and adapt.



For further information on the Regional Climate Action Roadmap, scan the QR code to go to our project website.



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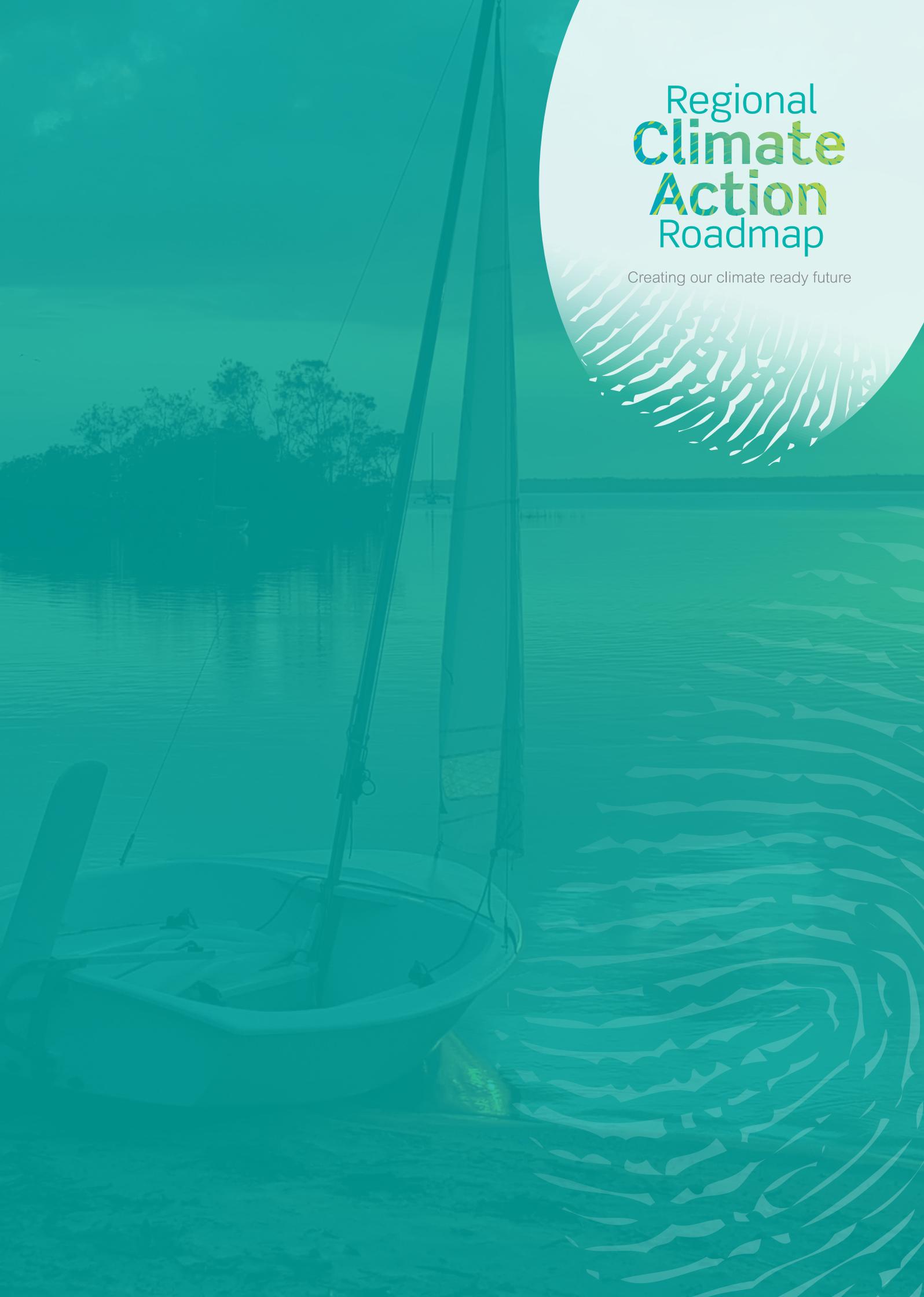
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