



# Creek to Coral Business Plan

A COMBINED TOWNSVILLE, THURINGOWA AND  
STATE GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE TO MAINTAIN AND  
ENHANCE OUR HEALTHY WATERWAYS IN THE  
COASTAL DRY TROPICS

## **VISION**

Creek to Coral's vision is to achieve, sustain and promote the benefits of a clean, fresh and marine water ecosystem and to encourage, educate and involve community in integrated waterway management. Emphasis is placed on information exchange linking objectives resulting in increased quality of water in the Townsville Thuringowa Coastal Dry Tropics.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

To maintain ecologically engineered and environmentally sustainable clean wetlands and water-ways from Creek to Coral within the Townsville Thuringowa Coastal Dry Tropics catchments.

This will be achieved by emphasising a combined approach on a holistic scientific, community, business and local, state and commonwealth government scale, resulting in good water quality, appropriately managed within the coastal catchments and local marine environments.

## **INTRODUCTION**

This business overview is intended to inform interested agencies about, and facilitate consultation on, the development and implementation of the Creek to Coral initiative for management of the Townsville Thuringowa Waterways in the Coastal Dry Tropics of North Queensland.

NOTE: Townsville Thuringowa lies within the dry tropical coast region of Queensland (State Coastal Management Plan August 2001)

The Creek to Coral project is about the sustainable use and management (environmental, economic and social) of our coastal marine and freshwater resources. The concept is a locally adapted version of the South East Queensland (SEQ) Healthy Waterways Program and emphasizes local concerns and issues in an environmental context that is relevant to the Townsville Thuringowa dry tropics adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef.

The Creek to Coral concept is simple and all encompassing whereby creek applies to the top of the catchment and relates to freshwater, all the way through to more estuarine waterways which ultimately lead to the Great Barrier Reef, hence the choice of the word coral.

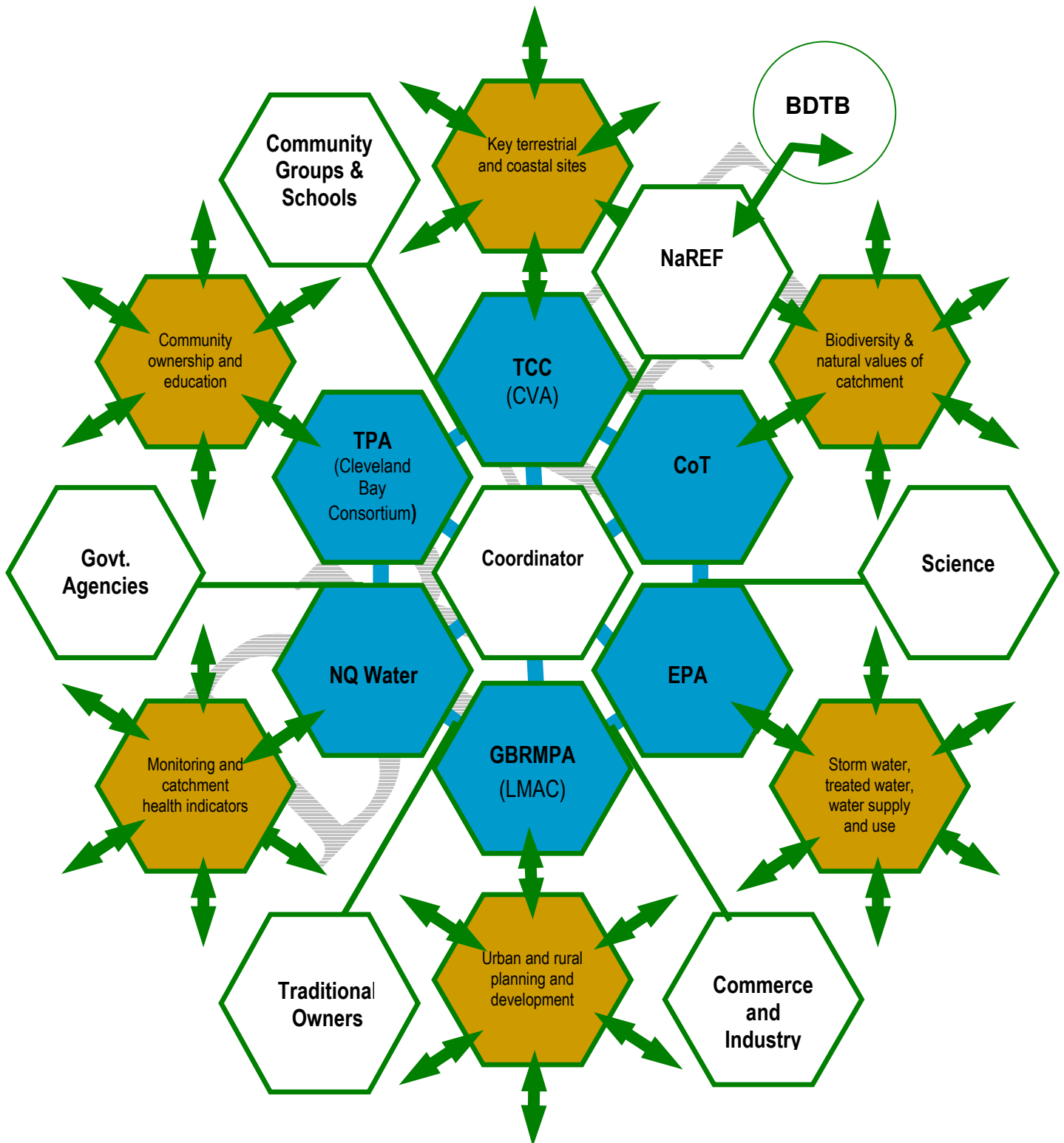
In addition and as stipulated in the current Natural Resources and Environment Forum (NaREF) Natural Resource Management (NRM) community target setting activities there exists a perception that the ocean is separate from the land by an impenetrable barrier and for these reasons only one “Freshwater, Groundwater, Coastal and Marine Habitat Management” package was submitted. Creek to Coral fully supports and identifies with this catchment wide thinking combining the coastal and marine issues with catchment, groundwater wetland and waterway issues, aiming for a fully integrated catchment management approach within the Townsville and Thuringowa region.

A key priority in the ‘Community Plan for Natural Resource Management in Townsville Thuringowa’ by the Townsville Thuringowa Landcare Association is “To secure commitment and participation in integrated catchment management of natural resources from all relevant interest-groups in Townsville Thuringowa” This is also an integral component of Creek to Coral and is central to its success.

## **OBJECTIVES**

- Utilise the skills, expertise and resources within the Townsville Thuringowa coastal catchments for its management and to encourage local ownership, assistance and support.
- Protect and enhance (rehabilitate) where necessary natural values, biodiversity and ecosystem services of the coastal catchments, floodplains and wetlands.
- Ensure sustainable management of storm water and effluent, promoting best practice techniques to manage catchments and waterways and where necessary develop innovative and nationally significant approaches.
- Focus on the benefits and opportunities of total water cycle management including conservation of the regional water resource from rainfall to outfall.
- As stipulated by the Commonwealths 2008 requirements reduce N and P discharge to a 5:1 ratio or equivalent, through a load based wastewater licence.
- Prepare coastal catchment and waterway health indicators for the production of a report card, based on scientific research into water quality and ecosystem health in order to understand process and impacts, and potentially linking with CRC's Catchment to Reef program.
- View the coastal marine environment as a biophysical indicator of our effectiveness in managing terrestrial waterways and wetlands.
- Inform, educate, involve and engender community based stewardship, awareness and ownership of catchment issues by Catchment tours, NQ Wetlands Festival, Ecofiesta, School programs (Reef Guardian Schools, Sustainable Schools), Reef Beat etc.
- Compliment and respect the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan (Aust. Gov) and align Creek to Coral monitoring program where possible with the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan (RWQPP) Monitoring Outline.
- Potentially utilise the Ross River Waterway Management System (NQ Water, Townsville City Council, City of Thuringowa) as a management model and expand it to include other river systems and both Cleveland and Halifax bays.
- Reflect the NRM targets set in the Townsville – Thuringowa Region within the “Freshwater, Groundwater, Coastal and Marine Habitat Management” package as part of the development of and implementation of the accredited Burdekin Dry Tropics Region Plan.

### Current diagrammatic depiction of Creel to Coral framework



## Partners & Partnership Principles

The objectives outlined above can only occur with support from those industries, governments, community groups, scientists, organizations and people that impact on and/or manage the Townsville and Thuringowa catchments. Only with integrated support and commitment from partners can this be achieved. A diagrammatic depiction of this integrated framework is presented here:

### **Adaptive Management Concept**

Creek to Coral works within an adaptive management framework, recognising that information is constantly updated and will evolve with the projects development and increasing longevity. An adaptive management framework thus provides the flexibility to change existing structure and practices as knowledge increases, legislation changes and partnerships develop further potentially to extend beyond the Townsville and Thuringowa local government boundaries.

### **Structure**

Creek to Coral is currently managed by a Board of Directors made up of the Mayors of both Townsville and Thuringowa, the Executive Director of the EPA and a GBRMPA representative. The Board is supported by a Project Control Group (PCG) consisting of representatives from TCC, CoT, EPA & GBRMPA. In addition an Environmental Management Reference Group (EMRG), a Traditional Owner group and four working groups facilitated by the Creek to Coral Coordinator make up the communication network of Creek to Coral. The chairs of the working groups consist of members of the EMRG.

The working groups are:

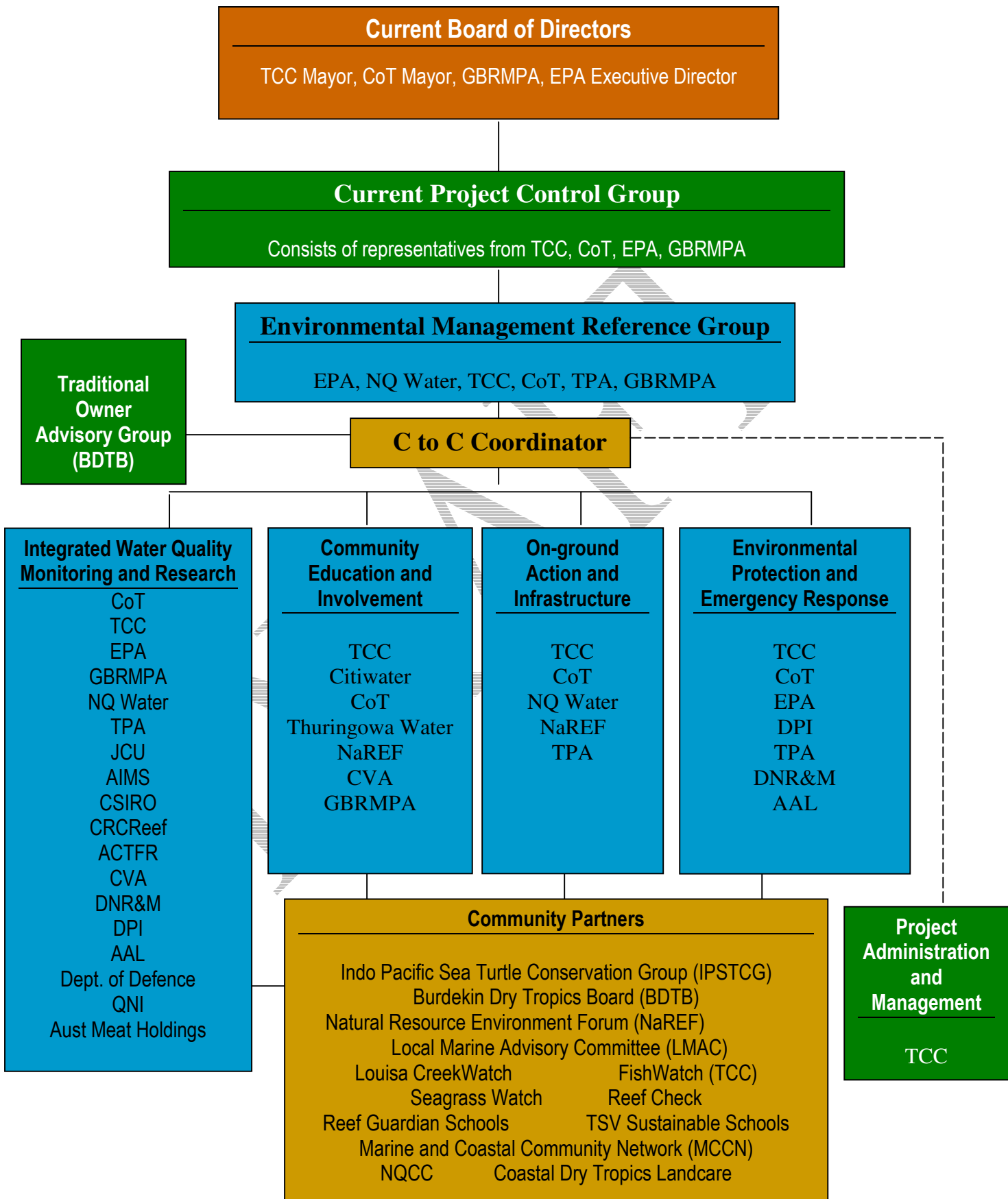
1. *Integrated Water Quality Monitoring and Research*
2. *Community Education and Involvement*
3. *On ground action and infrastructure*
4. *Environmental Protection and Emergency Response*

### **Use of the Creek to Coral logo**

Stakeholders can use the Creek to Coral logo beside their own to demonstrate to the community and other Creek to Coral partners that they:

- Contribute to, or collaborate with Creek to Coral either financially or in kind
- And/or that their projects support the principals and objectives of Creek to Coral, reflecting the working group priorities.

**Current Communications network**



## Working Groups

A goal set for each working group is to develop a draft Integrated Management Plan including a clear understanding of all project objectives, implementation strategies and reporting strategies. Relevant and current projects by each partner will be attached as appendices and supporting documentation. Creek to Corals focus is on integration, not reinventing the wheel.

The proposed structure for the individual working groups will be similar to that of a committee with a chair consisting of a EMRG member, minutes secretary and vice chair elected each financial year. Working groups can hold workshops and forums on particular issues in place of or in addition to meetings. There will be flexibility within each group in relation to the frequency of meetings with an email network set up within and between relevant groups. Meetings will be expected to take place within normal working hours.

### ***Community Education and Involvement***

*Objectives and activities which already occur, such as those listed below, could be supported and developed further:*

- Public and School Catchment tours that highlight healthy waterways and catchment initiatives and increase awareness in total water management principles – water supply, health, conservation; stormwater, and wastewater treatment (sewage) and water recycling across our catchments.
- Special water management events coordination and community involvement (e.g. National Water Week, World Wetlands Day, Seaweed; Sunfish Pest Fish Competition - Tilapia); World Environment Day and Young Leaders (environmental) Congress.
- Production of community based information web sites (e.g. [www.soe-townsville.org/louisacreekwatch/](http://www.soe-townsville.org/louisacreekwatch/)) and community based newsletters
- Actively support community stewardship of Total Water Cycle Management through onground programs such as Louisa Creekwatch, RIVER, Revive our Wetlands and SeagrassWatch.
- Formation of a quarterly Creek to Coral event, focusing on plastics pollution in the marine environment, highlighting storm water management initiatives and gross pollutant traps (GPT's) and utilising boats for the extraction of rubbish from waterways, compiling litter audit based on volunteer community capacity.
- Complimentary curriculum based NRM education programs such as the "What a Load of Rubbish Game (WALOR)," Reef Guardian Schools program (GBRMPA) and class catchment excursions (e.g. National Water Week Heatley Special Education Unit Macro invertebrate analysis of Louisa Creek and Wastewater and stormwater treatment)

## ***On-ground Action and Infrastructure***

*The focus of this working group is on issues such as:*

- Determine the extent of riparian vegetation that needs rehabilitating, mapping wetlands and riverways and identify their conservation status (i.e. fish habitat, seagrass meadows, rare or endangered species)
- Identify native aquatic plants and exotic weeds that are present within the Creek to Coral catchments, establishing a management regime for exotics
- Map the location of gross pollutant traps (GPTs)
- Upgrade sewage treatment plants to meet 2008 Commonwealth requirements and explore, research and wherever possible implement wastewater recycling opportunities
- Manage stormwater in ways that reflect and have relevance to local climatic conditions and utilising strategies such as artificial wetlands to retain and extract the nutrients from water prior to release on the Great Barrier Reef (GBR)
- Improve localised understand of coastal beach and dune erosion, utilising strategies such as sand renourishment as a long-term management option.
- Examine the potential for and determine the viability of an artificial reef within Cleveland bay.

## ***Environmental Protection and Emergency Response***

- Annual compliance programs developed with consideration given to proactive industry inspections within the Creek to Coral study area.
- Government agencies and other relevant stakeholders continue to improve communication and procedures in dealing with Emergency incidents
- Integrate procedures where possible for addressing issues such as Tricodesmium outbreaks, fish kills, oil spills (land and sea), acid sulphate soils, sediment and protected species (sea turtles)



## ***Integrated Water Quality Monitoring and Research Working Group***

*Objectives such as those listed below can be determined fully and further developed over the next 4 years:*

- Identify wetland values within Townsville and Thuringowa
- Completion of a baseline water quality monitoring Report based on current monitoring of groundwater, stormwater, wetlands, estuarine and marine habitats
- Establishment of sites for monitoring
- Integrate existing monitoring programs for inclusion into report card
- Establishment of appropriate indicators for monitoring fresh and marine waters
- Creation of report card to compare rivers and bays between years thus establishing trends to further assist catchment management decisions
- Utilise community group data for monitoring (Seagrass Watch, Indo-Pacific Sea Turtle Conservation Group (IPSTCG), Waterwatch, RIVER, Louisa Creek Watch)

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

This statement outlines the main Creek to Coral Corporate Governance practices which are dealt with under the following headings: Board of Directors and The Role of the Board, the Composition of the Board, Privacy, Confidentiality and Accountability.

### ***Composition of the Board***

The Board currently consists of the Mayor of Townsville City Council (TCC), the Mayor of the City of Thuringowa (CoT), the Executive Director of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and a representative of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA).

Directors' appointments are based on their ability to contribute proper skills required to assist the Creek to Coral in its operations and future development. The adequacy of the Board and the appointment of new Directors will be reviewed periodically by the existing Board.

The Board will meet twice yearly whereas it is proposed the Project Control Group and Environmental Management Reference Group meet independently every second month at the Maritime Museum in Palmer St, South Townsville.

### **Role of the Board**

The Board is responsible for the overall Corporate Governance of the Creek to Coral initiative including its strategic direction, establishing goals for management and monitoring the achievement of these goals. To assist in the execution of its responsibilities, the Board has established a Project Control Group with supporting Working Groups and in addition have employed a project coordinator.

Additional functions of the Board are to:

- Guide and monitor the business and affairs of Creek to Coral on behalf of the stakeholders by whom they represent and to whom they are accountable.
- Approve goals, strategy and plans for the future direction of Creek to Coral
- Discuss and approve management recommendations suggested by the Project Control Group
- Monitor budget expenditure, and identify future funding opportunities
- The Board reviews and approves the annual update of the Business Plan
- The Board of Directors aims to ensure that the members of the Project Control Group are informed of all major developments affecting the Creek to Coral state of affairs.
- Board information is communicated to the Project Control Group via the project coordinator
- A proposed Creek to Coral newsletter, "Our Waterways, Our Responsibility", issued twice per year, discusses all issues of interest to members of the public and is subject to approval by the Board and will serve as the Creek to Coral annual report.

## **Traditional Owner Advisory Group**

The Traditional Owner Advisory Group provides advice on issues associated with implementation as well as providing a point of contact for indigenous people to raise issues, provide feedback and disseminate relevant information through their networks.

## **Time Frame**

Creek to Coral is a 4 year project that was launched 12<sup>th</sup> December 2003 by the Minister for the Environment Dean Wells. A coordinator will be appointed at the beginning of the 2004/5 financial year after which working group workshops and meetings will begin. These will create a more detailed time line for priority objectives and goals set by each working group.

## **Project Administration and Management**

Townsville City Council is responsible for financial and legal accountability of the project administration and management of Creek to Coral and will auspice the appointment of the Creek to Coral coordinator.

## **Privacy, Confidentiality and Accountability**

The Creek to Coral project respects the privacy of individuals and the confidentiality of the commercial information owned by its interest agencies. Creek to Coral equally adheres to the principles of open and accountable administration of its own affairs.

## **Role of the Creek to Coral coordinator**

Central to the success of Creek to Coral is the employment of a coordinator to facilitate the programs process and develop effective process for inter-agency interaction. The project Coordinators role and objectives include:

- Facilitate the inclusion of all interest agencies and groups and uptake all relevant concerns and current initiatives into the regional Creek to Coral plan.
- Coordinate communication and information exchange between the Project control group, the Board and the four Working groups and community partners. This will be encouraged through a series of ongoing workshops and meetings.

## **The role of Community Groups and their involvement in Creek to Coral**

- Community group involvement in Creek to Coral will be encouraged and supported with active participation in all working groups

## **Existing and potential funding**

## **(Contributions and Grant Applications)**

No single organization can provide the resources and funding to improve and sustainably manage the entire catchment, which is ultimately the goal of Creek to Coral.

### **Existing**

- Townsville City Council and City of Thuringowa are already committed to contributing financially to Creek to Coral relative to the population within the local government areas
- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), NQ Water and the Townsville Port Authority (TPA) have also committed to contributing to Creek to Coral financially
- NHT2 - Integrated Community Education and Involvement in Total Water Cycle Management (Creek to Coral Project 2) \$ 45,000

### **Potential**

- Commerce and Industry Contributions
- Commonwealth & State Government funds possible % of funds allocated to monitoring and community education channelled to Creek to Coral
- Department of Environment and Heritage – Coastal Catchments Initiative is a potential funding source
- RWQPP Identification of issues and priorities for immediate and future investment opportunities with Reef Water Quality Protection Planning
- Envirofund applications
- Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) bids and Australian Research Grants (ARC) grants

## **Legislation of relevance to Creek to Coral**

### ***Local Government Act 1993***

The Local Government Act provides a legal framework and guidelines for the operation of local government in Queensland as autonomous bodies independent of State and Commonwealth agencies. The Act enables local government, amongst other things, to make local laws

(formerly referred to as By Laws).

#### ***Environmental Protection Act 1994***

The act asserts that all persons have a general environmental duty not to cause environmental harm, and to report any harm that does occur.

The Act defines environmentally relevant activities (ERAs) and provides for the issue of licences to carry out various works as well as the nature of Environmental Impact Statements that may be required for ERAs. The provisions for contaminated land are also included in this Act.

#### ***Environmental Protection (Water) Policy 1997***

The policy applies to all Queensland waters. The 'environmental values' of waters are to be protected and/or enhanced under the policy. Indicators of environmental values of water can be defined by 'site specific documents', 'documents published by a recognised entity', or the Australian Water Quality Guidelines for Marine and Fresh Waters (ANZECC). Water quality objectives are not defined in the policy however water quality objectives are considered to be "the set of water quality guidelines for indicators that will protect all environmental values for the water" (s 11 (2)).

#### ***Fisheries Act 1994***

The Act regulates "the management, use, development and protection of fisheries resources and fish habitats, and the management of aquaculture activities" (p.11).

#### ***Fisheries Management (Freshwater) Plan 1999***

This plan defines the activities that can be carried out with respect to freshwater fisheries

#### ***Water Act 2000***

The Water Act 2000 replaces the Water Resources Act 1989. The Water Act has assumed most of the functions of the Water Resources Act with some of these functions now integrated with the IPA.

One of the main objectives of the act was to provide a legislative base for water resource plans. Water resource plans have been prepared for some parts of Queensland in an attempt to ensure the sustainable use of the state's water resources. These plans specify allowable water allocations in a designated area, and can include conditions relating to harvesting overland flow water.

#### ***Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994***

The Act is essentially about marine safety and applies to the operation of any 'ship' on Queensland waters. A ship is deemed to be "any kind of boat or other vessel used or, for a boat or other vessel being built, intended to be used, in navigation by water or for any other purpose on water" (s 10 (1)).

#### ***Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975- SECT 66Regulations***

(1) The Governor-General may make regulations, not inconsistent with this Act or with a zoning plan, prescribing all matters required or permitted by this Act to be prescribed or necessary or convenient to be prescribed for carrying out or giving effect to this Act.

(2) Without limiting the generality of subsection (1), regulations may be made:

(e) regulating or prohibiting acts (whether in the Marine Park or elsewhere) that may pollute water in a manner harmful to animals and plants in the Marine Park; (f) providing for the protection and preservation of the Marine Park and property and things in the Marine Park

***Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill 2003***

***Native Title (Queensland) Act 1993***

***Coastal Management Act***

***Marine Parks Act***

***Harbours and Marine Act 1977***

***Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act***

***Vegetation Management Act 1999 (and Land Act)***

The purpose of the act is aimed at achieving sustainability. The act, in the simplest sense, defines what native vegetation can and cannot be cleared on freehold land. The act is administered by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines (DNRM).

***Nature Conservation Act 1992***

Under the Nature Conservation Act 1992 (Qld) wildlife species (plant and animal) are prescribed and listed in a number of conservation categories i.e. presumed extinct, endangered, vulnerable, rare, common, international or prohibited.

***Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002***

This is the primary act for the control of plant and animal pest species in Queensland.

***State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971***

*“An Act to provide for State planning and development through a coordinated system of public works organization, for environmental coordination, and for related purposes”* (p.9).

***Transport Infrastructure Act 1994***

This is an Act *“about infrastructure and related matters”* (p.25) which provides the Department of Main Roads with the legislative power to plan for, construct and maintain the network of State roads, amongst other matters.

***Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995***

*“An Act about road management and other purposes related to transport”* (p.11). One of the objectives of the Act is to *“improve road safety and the environmental impact of road use in ways that contribute to overall transport effectiveness and efficiency”* (s 3 (1) (iii)).

***Integrated Planning Act 1997***

The Integrated Planning Act (IPA) 1997 is the legislation responsible for determining the parameters of local government Planning Schemes which set the scene for strategic development direction and define the development assessment process.

***Townsville City Council (Douglas Land Development) Act 1993***

This Act was prepared to avoid any potential conflict of interest associated with the development of Council owned land and the administration of the development assessment process by Council.