

Cairns Regional Council  
State of the Environment -  
Sustainability Scorecard Report  
2010/11



This report has been produced by Cairns Regional Council.

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Cover photograph: Cattana Wetlands



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Daintree Pine, *Gymnostoma australicum*



*Sustainable Living Expo 2011 - Cairns Esplanade*

## Introduction

This is Cairns Regional Council's third State of the Environment Report (SOE). In Queensland there is no legislative requirement for Councils to produce an SOE, however Council believes in the importance of transparent reporting and accountability of its performance to the community.

The State of the Environment Report uses data collected for various indicators and monitors Council's performance against them. Past reports have focussed on natural environment indicators only. A review has been undertaken on the indicators reported against and whether the data is meaningful or not. It is important that Council reports against indicators that are within our influence to act upon. Council believes it is important that the indicators are within its influence to change, reflect Council's performance and are consistent over time.

## Structure of Report

This report includes "Snapshots" of key data, a table which summarises all data, explanations of what the data means and related Council stories. The data snapshots should be read together with the explanations to ensure full understanding of the trends for this year.

In 2011 Council adopted the use of a Sustainability Scorecard framework which includes a Sustainability Assessment tool, monthly internal reports and annual community report. The Framework aims to embed the consideration of sustainability into all of Council's business and provide a methodology for reporting.

The annual State of the Environment Report will from now on be combined with the annual Sustainability Scorecard report. This will provide the community with an indication of Council's performance against indicators grouped under the following four themes of sustainability:

- Improving Resource Efficiency
- Conserving Biodiversity
- Enhancing Community health and Wellbeing
- Delivering sound economic management and governance



Native Hoya, *Hoya australis*

## Water

- Per capita daily water consumption (residential only) 223 litres per day, 2.8% more than previous year.
- Per capita daily water consumption (residential, industrial, commercial and agricultural) 497 litres per day, 7.8% more than previous year.
- 1,042 Mega litres of recycled water used, the same amount as in the previous year.



## Energy and emissions

- Council used 41,885,192 kilowatt hours of electricity, 8.5% more than the previous year.
- Council's electricity use emitted a total of 37,278 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent, 5.6% more than the previous year.
- Electricity use for Council buildings decreased by 9% from the previous year.
- Council's vehicles emitted a total of 5210 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent, 28% more than the previous year.



## Waste

- 50,103 tonnes of domestic kerbside waste collected, 1.4% more than previous year.
- 11,357 tonnes of domestic kerbside recycling collected, 2.5% more than previous year.
- 9,226 tonnes of compost exported from Bedminster, 42.4% less than previous year.
- 37,943 tonnes of Green Waste processed, 35% more than previous year.
- 2,877 tonnes of metal recycled, 0.2% less than previous year.
- 77 tonnes of batteries sent for recycling, 10.5% less than previous year.
- 257 tonnes of commercial waste was recycled, 646% more than previous year.
- 91,430 litres of oil sent for recycling, 15.9% more than previous year.



## Conserving biodiversity

- 43,680 trees planted, 1.3% less than the previous year.
- 11,108 trees donated to the community, 18.8% less than the previous year.
- Number of trees under Council management increased by 36% from the previous year.
- 849 feral pigs destroyed, 26.5% more than the previous year.
- 0.96% of total Council budget was spent on management of natural areas, 0.07% more than previous year.





## Governance & Economic management

- 376 Planning Applications received, 31.6% less than previous year.
- 2653 Building Approvals issued, 25.4% less than previous year.
- Council staff turnover rate 10.34%, 1.9% lower than previous year.
- Staff satisfaction rating 4.38 (out of 7), 3.8% higher than previous year.



## Community wellbeing

- 96.1 square kilometres of Council area is accessible as parks and land for community use
- There are 482.6 kilometers of shared cycle/pedestrian pathway and 6km of dedicated cycleway in the Council area.
- Community Overall Satisfaction rating 77.5%
- 7.8% of total annual Council budget was spent on community events and cultural services, events and facilities, 0.17% less than previous year.



# Sustainability Scorecard explained

## About the Sustainability Scorecard

The Scorecard Project is a key Council initiative to implement Council's *Corporate Plan* and *Sustainability Policy*. It does this by providing the mechanism for measuring and reporting on progress in delivering the policy and acts as a change management tool as well. The latter is achieved by facilitating a culture shift amongst staff for increasing their understanding and applying sustainability principles to their everyday work activities. It:





- Ensures sustainability is considered in all Council operations and activities;
- Provides language to communicate sustainability with a shared understanding;
- Measures and communicates Council's sustainability performance;
- Encourages thinking "outside of the square"; and
- Improves overall sustainability performance.

## What sustainability means at Council

The Sustainability Scorecard has been tailored to apply to the areas where Council is able to drive improvement. The sustainability criteria of the scorecard are grouped under the following four themes:

- Improving Resource Efficiency
- Conserving Biodiversity
- Enhancing Community Health and Wellbeing
- Delivering Sound Governance and Economic Management

The following table provides more detail on these themes:

Improving resource efficiency	Conserving biodiversity	Enhancing community health and wellbeing	Delivering sound governance and economic management
			
Greenhouse gas emissions	Water quality	Open space	Local economy
Waste reduction	Protection of habitat	Community programs	Economic sustainability
Sustainable use of resources	Environmental restoration	Community satisfaction	Staff wellbeing
Water conservation		Disaster preparedness and response	

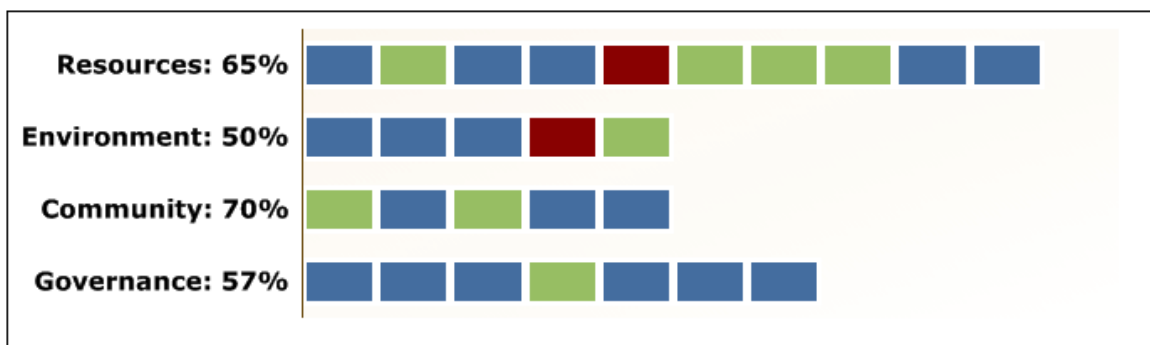
The indicators used previously in the SOE reports have been modified and grouped under these four themes of sustainability. The annual *State of the Environment – Sustainability Scorecard report* will report on the ongoing performance of Council across these four themes. Over the coming years additional indicators will be considered and integrated to indicate the sustainability performance of Council.

# Sustainability Scorecard explained

## How the Scorecard works

The Sustainability Assessment Tool is now used by Council staff to assess projects and decisions, and is required in every Council report and for purchases over \$15,000. It is an easy to use net based questionnaire asking a series of questions under each of the four themes of sustainability. The end product of the tool is a Sustainability Assessment Report for the proposed project, with a percentage score for each theme.

The aim is for the tool to encourage staff to consider sustainability in every decision, driving continued improvements in environmental performance, resource use, economic sustainability, staff wellbeing and community satisfaction.



■ Positive
 ■ Neutral
 ■ Negative

# Data - Improving Resource Efficiency

Indicator	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	Trend	<span style="color: green;">◕</span> Positive <span style="color: blue;">◕</span> Negative - Neutral^
<b>ENERGY &amp; EMISSIONS</b>					
Fuel use by Council vehicles – Diesel (litres)	1,311,024	1,216,921	1,627,072	+34%	◕
Fuel use by Council vehicles – Unleaded (litres)	422,609	331,065	344,980	+4%	◕
Greenhouse gas emissions from fuel use (tonnes CO <sup>2</sup> e)*	4,854	4070	5,210	+28%	◕
Total electricity use by Council (kWh)	32,094,847	38,614,446	41,885,192	+9%	◕
Electricity use by Street Lighting (kWh)	7,119,125	7,323,386	7,820,364	+7%	◕
Electricity use by Buildings (kWh)	10,334,749	10,205,113	9,321,019	-9%	◕
Electricity use by Water and Sewage (kWh)	14,640,973	21,085,947	24,743,809	+17%	◕
Greenhouse gas emissions from electricity use (tonnes CO <sup>2</sup> e)*	33,761	35,310	37,278	+6%	◕
<b>WATER</b>					
Recycled Water Used (litres)	650ML	1042ML	1042ML	-	◕
Per capita daily water consumption (residential, industrial, commercial and agricultural) (litres)**	447 L/day	461 L/day	497 L/day	+ 8%	◕
Per capita daily water consumption (residential only) (litres)**	212 L/day	217 L/day	223 L/day	+3%	◕



# Data - Improving Resource Efficiency

Indicator	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	Trend	<span style="color: green;">ü</span> Positive <span style="color: blue;">û</span> Negative - Neutral^
<b>WASTE</b>					
Domestic Kerbside Waste collected (tonnes)	48,913	49,412	50,103	+1%	û
General domestic waste dropped at Transfer Stations (tonnes)	9,556	9,350	11,291	+21%	û
Construction waste to Transfer Stations (tonnes)	2,318	677	Not available	-	-
Construction waste to landfill (tonnes)	2,318	677	Not available	-	-
Commercial waste to Transfer Stations (tonnes)	5,222	3,847	4,307	+12%	û
Commercial waste to landfill (tonnes)	3,084	2,363	2,041	-146%	ü
Total waste to Bedminster (tonnes)	78,504	46,550	64,188	+ 38%	ü
Total waste directly to landfill***	0	22,777	18,295	-20%-	ü
Compost exported from Bedminster (tonnes)	23,797	16,024	9,226	- 42%	-
Waste exported from Bedminster to landfill (tonnes)	44,033	28,836	44,723	+13%	-
<b>RECYCLING</b>					
Total recyclables collected (tonnes)	11,028	11,306	11,855	+ 5%	ü
Total recyclables sent for recycling (tonnes)	5,031	6,008	6,307	+ 5%	ü
Proportion of collected recyclables sent for recycling	46%	53%	53%	-	-
Domestic kerbside recycling collected (tonnes)	10,877	11,075	11,357	+ 3%	ü
Commercial waste recycled (tonnes)	21	34.44	257	+ 646%	ü
Green waste processed (tonnes)	25,550	28,098	37,943	+ 35%	-
Metal recycled (tonnes)	2,903	2,882	2877	-	-
Tyres recycled (tonnes)	15,494	11,861	18,047	52%+	ü
Oil sent for recycling (litres)	51,760	78,885	91,430	16%+	ü
Batteries sent for recycling (tonnes)	80	86	77	-11%	-

# Data - Conserving biodiversity

Indicator	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	Trend	<span style="color: green;">ü</span> Positive <span style="color: blue;">û</span> Negative - Neutral^
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION</b>					
Number of trees planted by Council	49,166	44,243	43,680	-1%	-
Number of trees donated to the community	27,689	13,687	11,108	-19%	<span style="color: blue;">û</span>
Number of trees under management	74, 150	123, 316	167, 559	+36%	<span style="color: green;">ü</span>
Days spent on watering/maintenance/site preparation	242	310	1442	+365%	<span style="color: green;">ü</span>
Number of seedlings potted	105,675	78,246	63489	-19%	-
Number of hours spent on seed collection	248	225	226	-	-
Percent of annual Council budget spent on natural areas management	0.5%	0.89%	0.96%	+0.07%	<span style="color: green;">ü</span>
<b>PEST MANAGEMENT</b>					
Number of Pest Treatments	325	386	982	+154%	<span style="color: green;">ü</span>
Number feral pigs destroyed	706	671	849	+27%	<span style="color: green;">ü</span>
Number feral pigs destroyed (Daintree)	602	589	547	-7%	-
High Priority Weeds (days)	138	164	1128	+588%	<span style="color: green;">ü</span>
<b>MOSQUITO CONTROL</b>					
Number of Eastern Rainbow Fish Released	0	12,250	0	-	-
Number of Mosquito Complaints Received	Not collected	227	588	+159%	-
Number of Midge Complaints Received	Not collected	20	2	-90%	-
Amount of pesticide sprayed for mosquito control (Reslin and Pyrecide) (litres)	Not collected	431	531	+23%	<span style="color: green;">ü</span>
<b>WATER QUALITY</b>					
Compliance with EPA Sewerage Licensing requirements (%)	97%	98%	99%	+1%	<span style="color: green;">ü</span>

# Data - Community, Governance and Economy

Indicator	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	Trend	<span style="color: green;">ü</span> Positive <span style="color: blue;">û</span> Negative - Neutral <sup>^</sup>
<b>OPEN SPACE</b>					
Council land area accessible as parks and lands for community (square kilometres)	Not available	Not available	96.1	-	-
<b>COMMUNITY PROGRAMS</b>					
Kilometres of shared cycle/pedestrian pathways within Council region	Not available	423	482.6	+14%	ü
Kilometres of dedicated bikeways within Council region	0	0	6	-	ü
Total cyclist count for Super Tuesday bike count	Not available	Not available	1139	-	-
Percent of Council budget spent on cultural service events, facilities and programs	Not available	8%	7.83%	-0.17%	-
<b>COMMUNITY SATISFACTION</b>					
Community Overall Satisfaction rating (% of respondents rating overall satisfaction as average or above average)	Not available	Not available	77.5	-	ü
<b>ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY</b>					
Building Applications approved	3724	3557	2653	-25%	-
Planning Applications received	539	521	376	-32%	-
<b>STAFF WELLBEING</b>					
Staff turnover rate (%)	Not available	12.22	10.34	-2%	ü
Average days of sick leave taken per Council staff member	Not available	7	7.7	+10%	û
Employee Overall Satisfaction Rating (out of 7)	Not available	4.22	4.38	+4%	ü

<sup>^</sup> Elements for which the trend has neither positive or negative environmental impacts, or for which impacts are unclear.

<sup>\*</sup> Using NGER methodology for GHG emissions calculations (*National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting (NGER) Act 2007*).

<sup>\*\*</sup> Data for 2010 calendar year rather than 2010/11 financial year.

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> Due to Bedminster being out of operation.

# Sustainability Performance Summary

## Improving Resource Efficiency

### Emissions

Total electricity use across Council increased by 8.5% and generated 37,278 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. This increase was driven by an increase in electricity used for water and sewage treatment (17.3% increase). More electricity was used for sewage treatment because of the recent Cleaner Seas upgrade to wastewater treatment plants. These upgrades resulted in a much higher quality of sewage treatment (A+), greatly reducing sewage discharge impacts on the environment. These upgraded plants use more electricity, but the reduction in fugitive emissions (methane) from aerobic treatment offsets the larger carbon footprint from electricity use. This will be quantified by the Energy and Emissions System later in the year. The high rainfall may have contributed to this increased electricity use, as during wet times the volume of waste water entering the treatment stations increases and more electricity is required to treat it.

Electricity used for street lighting also increased (by 6.8%). An energy efficient street lighting trial between Ergon Energy and Council is continuing to test energy efficiency technologies in a tropical climate. Electricity use in Council buildings decreased by 9%, due to improved energy efficiency in new and existing Council buildings and changes in staff behaviour. The implementation of the Sustainability Assessment tool is prompting staff to consider sustainability in their day to day activities and the Green Smart program with a team of Green Stars encourages staff to reduce their impact. .

Council vehicles used more fuel and emitted a total of 5,210 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent, which is 28% more than 2009/10 Council vehicle emissions. This increase is most likely due to the additional vehicles used for the cyclone Yasi clean up as well as the addition of 37 new fleet vehicles. Of these, 26 were diesel, 5 petrol and 1 was an electric vehicle.

### Water

Average per capita water consumption, including industry and commercial uses, increased by around 8%, while per capita residential water consumption increased by around 3%. Given the high rainfall during this period, it is difficult to explain this increase. An regional water education program is targeting leakages and water consumption and aims to reduce the amount of water consumed in the region.

### Waste

The amount of general domestic waste and recyclable waste collected from kerbsides increased marginally (around 2%). Around half of recyclable materials collected were sent for recycling (53%), the same proportion as the previous year. The total amount of recyclables collected and sent for recycling increased which could indicate that more waste is being diverted from landfill and instead being recycled.

General domestic waste dropped at transfer stations increased by 20%, most likely due to the event of cyclone Yasi and resulting damage to and disposal of furniture and other materials. Construction waste to landfill data was not available for this period, but will be available again in 2012.

The Bedminster system, which processes all general waste, was not operational for several months of 2010 and was not functioning until November 2010. For this reason the 'Total waste directly to landfill' was 18,295 tonnes, and the amount of compost exported from the Bedminster dropped by 42%.

There was a large increase in the amount of commercial waste recycled, which is due to the upgrade of the Business Recycling initiative which encourages businesses to recycle (see page 17 ).



## Conserving Biodiversity

The number of trees under Council management increased to 167,559. This figure has more than doubled over the past two years, mostly as a result of the Cattana Wetlands revegetation project along with other revegetation projects in the region. The large increase in days spent on watering, maintenance and site preparation (365%) is predominantly a result of underestimates in previous years, and improved data capture methods for time spent on these tasks.

The proportion of Council's budget spent on management of natural areas increased by around 8%, reflecting the investment in additional revegetation and maintenance of planted areas.

The number of seedlings potted fluctuates from year to year as projects enter different phases. Over the past year, the number of seedlings potted decreased by 19% because planting at the Cattana project is scaling down and efforts are shifting to maintenance of planted trees.

The number of feral pigs destroyed increased by 27% to 849. This is due to improved trapping methods and increased trapping effort, particularly around water intakes.

There were no Eastern Rainbow fish released as the project is waiting on equipment to arrive.



*School group at Cattana wetlands*

# Sustainability Performance Summary

## Enhancing community health and wellbeing

The amount of land area available to the community as parks and lands for community use has been included for reference in future years.

The amount of shared cycle/pedestrian pathways has increased by around 14% to 483km. This includes the new Cairns Walking and Cycling Circuit which connects inner city paths for safer, active transport options for residents. A new dedicated cycle-only path was built from Aeroglen to the CBD with the aim of encourages commuters to cycle to work, as well as providing a safe option for recreational cyclists. The Super Tuesday Bike Count, which started in Cairns in 2010, will provide data on the number of cyclists on Cairns streets, which can be used as a benchmark for future years.

7.83% of Council's total budget was allocated to the Cultural Services and Facilities Branch (a minor decrease from 8% in the previous year). This Branch is responsible for delivering a large number of the cultural activities and services provided by Council, including running the Civic Theatre, the Tanks Arts Centre, the Botanic Gardens and the Cairns Esplanade and organising events such as the Cairns Festival, Fun Free Fitness on the Esplanade, Carnival on Collins, various youth arts programs and community partnerships (including Community Hubs).

The overall community satisfaction rating is from the Community Survey conducted in 2010 which found that 77.5% of respondents rated Council's performance as average or above. The previous year's survey does not have a comparable indicator.



*Fun Free Fitness Pilates class on the Cairns Esplanade*

## Delivering sound governance and economic management

The number of planning applications received and the number of building applications approved both fell significantly from the previous year. The drop in these figures reflects the results of the economic downturn which affected the building industry in the region. Planning applications and building approvals are reasonable indicators for economic growth in the region. Council is working to source a more holistic economic sustainability indicator for inclusion in future reports.

The percentage turnover for Council staff decreased by around 2%. Council aims to provide a healthy and rewarding workplace to retain skilled staff. Staff turnover data will be used to provide an indication of whether Council is achieving this goal. Another indicator of a healthy workplace is average days of sick leave taken per Council employee. The figure for 2010/11 was 7.7 days per person. The national average was 9.3. It is hard to comment on the Council trend between 2009/10 and 2010/11 however it will be a good indicator to monitor. Council is currently developing a Sustainable Building Design Policy and Checklist which aims to create not just more energy and water efficient Council buildings, but also healthier buildings. Annual days sick leave per employee will continue to be monitored into the future and will be used to assess whether these new buildings result in increased staff attendance and perceived wellbeing.

An employee survey is conducted annually to assess staff satisfaction. The previous survey revealed a 3.8% increase in employee satisfaction.



*Port Douglas Community Hall*

## Related stories - *Improving Resource Efficiency*

### Babinda Library generates renewable energy

The Babinda Library is now more efficient and is producing its own electricity, thanks to a recent energy efficiency upgrade and installation of a 4kW photovoltaic (solar) energy system.

The roof of the building was painted with heat-reflective paint to reduce heat gain, and the building is noticeably cooler inside, meaning that the air-conditioning systems can be used less. The library has also just had a lighting upgrade so that all lights are now highly efficient. Both of these measures will help to reduce electricity use in the building, and will reduce ongoing operational costs.

The solar energy system installed on the roof of the building will help to offset the library's electricity bills, further reducing running costs while safe guarding against rising electricity prices. Energy savings will be around \$1800 per year.



### Gordonvale Community Hall now more efficient

The Gordonvale Community Hall has undergone an energy-efficiency upgrade, thanks to a partnership between Council and Ergon Energy.

Council was successful in receiving funding from the Ergon EnviroFund grant program to install roof insulation, erect a front awning to reduce heat entering through north-facing windows and paint the roof with a heat reflective paint. In addition a 4kW photovoltaic (solar) energy system has been installed on the roof of the hall to generate renewable energy. This system should produce four times as much energy as the hall currently uses. Excess electricity will be fed back into the mains grid and Council will be paid for this electricity, reducing the payback period of the system.

The hall is now around four degrees cooler inside making it more comfortable for the Gordonvale hall users. In addition it now has a smaller carbon footprint and will have lower electricity bills.

## Related stories - Improving Resource Efficiency

### New Waste and Recyclable Collection Fleet

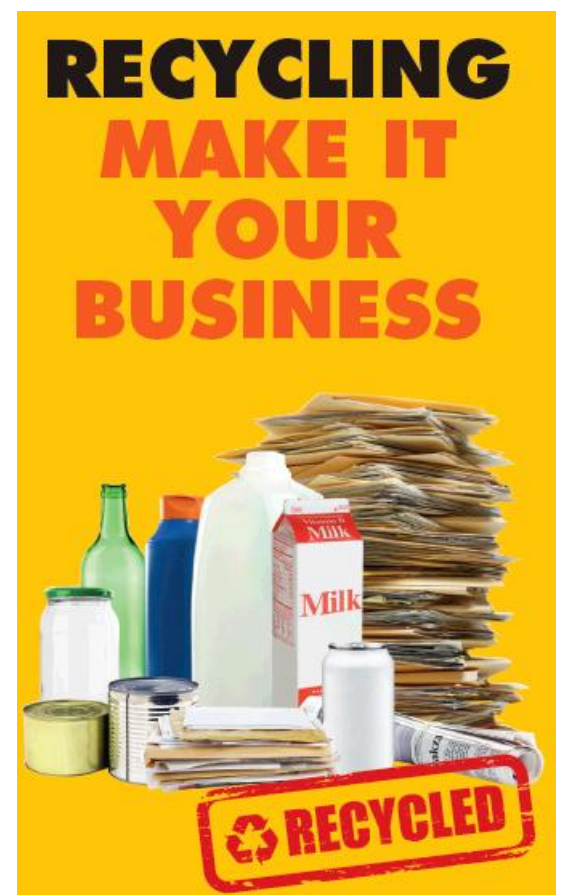
The commencement of the new Waste and Recycling contract in December 2010 included the requirement for the collection vehicles to be Euro 4 emissions standard compliant, which defines the acceptable limits for exhaust emissions. In addition, the collection runs are also being optimised to reduce unnecessary kilometres travelled. The new vehicles and more efficient collection runs will have the result of reducing emissions in collecting waste and recyclables. The new collection fleet will produce 98% less greenhouse gas emissions than the old vehicles, reducing Council's carbon footprint by several thousand tonnes of carbon emissions over the life of the contract.



### Improved Business Recycling Program

The Non-Residential Recycling initiative was recently upgraded to provide improved branding and resources to encourage small to medium enterprise to introduce or improve recycling within their business. The new branding includes a name change to Business Recycling and a new tagline of 'recycling, make it your business'. The scheme is designed to complement the materials collected in the domestic recyclable collection with more of an emphasis on paper and cardboard.

The aim of the Business Recycling program is to increase the participation of businesses (including schools) to maximise the collection of recyclables. The program included the development of case studies, a generic business recycling guide and information sheets. So far the reaction has been well received with a number of new businesses signing up to the program.



## Energy and Emissions Data Management System

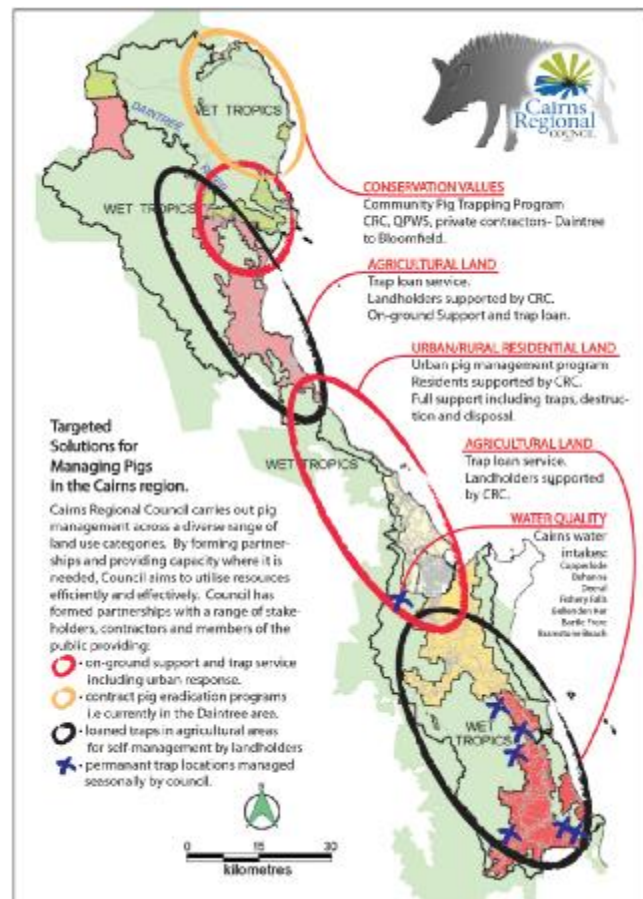
Council is developing an innovative solution to calculate, monitor and report on its energy and greenhouse gas emissions data. This system will be available to all staff via Council's intranet and will convert emissions sources to tables and graphs. Council will be able to report accurately and efficiently from high level all of Council emissions, down to facility level. This tool will start preparing Council for a tighter legislative carbon environment reducing future risk.



## Pig trapping in the Cairns Region

Pigs in the wet tropics are extremely hard to manage. The rugged, inaccessible forested National parks and extensive agricultural lowland areas offer both food and cover for an estimated 3 to 6 million feral pigs in Far North Queensland. In the Wet Tropics Area (WTA), abundant water, crops and seasonal rainforest provide excellent habitat for these pigs, with their favourite food being worms during the wetter months. Pigs cause damage to soil and vegetation particularly in wetter months when they dig holes to find earthworms in damp soil. This disturbance of the soil by the pigs uproots seedlings and leads to soil erosion. Pigs also compete with Cassowaries for food supply. Because of the environmental impacts of feral pigs, Council operates a pig eradication (trapping) program.

Just after the wet season, the rainforest becomes less habitable for pigs as the mountains dry out and food becomes scarce. At this time Council usually receives increased complaints as pigs migrate to lower altitudes including areas that are used for urban living and agriculture. Council runs a pig trapping program with 95 traps in the Cairns region: 25 traps in rural to high-density urban areas around Cairns down to Babinda; 5 traps at Copperlode dam; 5 traps in the Mossman area and a further 55 traps throughout the Daintree region.



### Pitcher plants protected with new management plan

An endangered species, the Climbing Pitcher Plant (*Nepenthes mirabilis*), has been found along Bramston Beach Road. This species is one of only two native species of pitcher plants found in Australia. It is carnivorous and obtains most of its nutrients through digestion of insects rather than from the often nutrient-poor soil. The Bramston Beach population of *N. mirabilis* is the southern most population of *Nepenthes* in Australia and currently has Endangered status under the Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulation 2006.

This population was being inadvertently affected by Council's mowing and herbicide applications used to maintain safe road verges. Once Council staff became aware of the plant's existence in the area, advice was obtained from a carnivorous plant expert from James Cook University. A roadside management plan has now been developed to identify the locations where this plant is growing, map these on GPS and ensure that impacts on these populations are avoided. Markers have been put in place to identify these populations for maintenance staff, and relevant staff have been informed about the species.



Climbing Pitcher Plant, *Nepenthes mirabilis*

### Improved standards protect trees

Council's Development Assessment Team are implementing best practice standards in relation to protection of trees on development sites. Development conditions are now being issued to ensure proper planning or setbacks to protect tree root systems, to avoid damage during the construction phase. The Development Assessment team are encouraging developers to keep vegetation, and are implementing Australian Standards and best practice methods in the Arboriculture Industry. This provides the trees adequate protection and ensures that our city remains green.

### Super Tuesday Bike Count keeps track of cyclist numbers

Cairns Regional Council participated in the Super Tuesday Bicycle Commuter Survey for the first time in 2010. This is Australia's biggest annual visual bike count which was commenced in 2007 by Bicycle Victoria. The count is designed to measure bicycle commuter flows in the morning peak on a Tuesday from 7am – 9am in September for the northern regions of Australia.

Council's involvement in the Super Tuesday 2010 count has provided good baseline information and future participation will provide reliable annual figures on bicycle commuters and their movements for the 22 nominated sites across council. Volunteers staff these sites and receive \$50 to donate to their chosen local charity.

### Dedicated cycleway to encourage active transport

Cycling is an efficient, economical and non-polluting form of transport and Cairns is ideal with its flat terrain and warm weather. Each person that decides to cycle in preference to using a car for a trip, assists the environment in many positive ways. A secondary benefit is that the cyclist engages in healthy exercise. Thus, for cycling to be an attractive alternative to other forms of transport, the cycleway needs to be safe, dedicated, efficient and desirable and provide a good link between home and destinations such as work, school, shopping, entertainment and recreational facilities.

6km of dedicated cycleway from the Cairns CBD to Aeroglen was officially opened in June 2011. This is stage one of a dedicated cycleway that will connect Palm Cove in the north, to Gordonvale in the south. The main aim of the dedicated cycleway is to encourage more people to cycle by providing a safe, dedicated, and desirable form of transport.

Council worked in partnership with the Department of Transport and Main Roads which contributed 75% of the \$6.1 million project with Council contributing \$1.5 million.





### Council acquires land on Mt Whitfield for community

In 2011, Council purchased a strategic area of land on Mt Whitfield. Securing this parcel into public ownership will protect the vital scenic amenity values, provide passive and active recreation, and enable the natural vegetation values to be protected and enhanced.

In late 2010, Council purchased freehold land in Mooroolbool to protect sporting fields from a potential sub-division development. This important purchase will ensure continued community access to the site, enhance community wellbeing and provide open space for community use.



### Cairns Cycling and Walking Circuit launched

To increase opportunities for enjoyable recreation and easy travel, Council has connected an additional 20km of shared paths to form circuits within central Cairns and launched the 'Cairns Walking & Cycling Circuit' in 2011.

The circuit offers safe off-road paths from the Esplanade lagoon along the foreshore to the Botanic Gardens and Cairns Central Swamp, along scenic waterways including Lily Creek and Saltwater Creek and past some regional sporting centres. This \$900,000 project was funded in partnership with the Queensland Government to get more Queenslanders active through sport and recreation. The circuit routes are signed, displaying distances of travel for each loop. Tree planting has also been undertaken to provide shade along these predominantly off-road paths.

### Sustainable Living Expo

The Sustainable Living Expo is an annual celebration of sustainable living. It's a day of information, product displays, live music, workshops, children's' activities and more. It's a great place to find out how to be part of creating a better world. The Expo offers an excellent opportunity for local businesses and is an interactive display of sustainable living information, technology demonstrations and new innovations.

The 2011 Expo was held on June 24th at the Cairns Esplanade and was attended by over 1000 people. Around 40 exhibitors showcased their products, services and information. There were free workshops on renewable energy, sustainable house design and straw bale gardens plus great music from local bands; Reggae Bliss and the Far Northern Soul Collective. Children created works of funky art from junk, and entries from the Recycled Sculpture Competition were on display. TAFE students exhibited their amazing outfits made from recycled treasures.

The Sustainable Living Expo continues to grow each year and Council looks forward to working with TAFE to hold this great event for many years into the future.



### Climate Change & Sustainability Grant created

Council has created a *Climate Change and Sustainability Grant Stream*. This grant stream will provide financial assistance to not-for-profit community groups that wish to pursue projects and activities which promote sustainability and enhance community resilience to climate change and/or peak oil.

The aim of the Climate Change and Sustainability grant stream is to encourage groups and individuals in the community to take the initiative to develop programs, activities, projects and events which make a positive contribution to promoting sustainable communities, improving energy efficiency, or enhancing community resilience to climate change.

A total of \$20,000 will be available annually, and applicants will be able to apply for between \$500 and \$10,000 for projects that will be completed within the following year.

## Related stories - *Delivering sound governance*

### Council staff

The attraction and retention of skilled employees contributes to a productive and sustainable workplace. Annual Employee Opinion Surveys have provided quantitative data and benchmarks to other Local Government areas. Key improvement initiatives identified in the Surveys are implemented to make Council a good place to work.

Based on feedback from the 2010 Survey, nine employee consultative committees, with Chairpersons and Coaches drawn from the workforce, were developed to give all employees an avenue to research, develop and recommend workplace improvements. The 2011 Survey indicated that 84% of staff had heard of the Your Voice Committees. Other initiatives identified in the 2011 Survey are being examined for further development.

### Improving Council's Customer Service

Council is committed to implementing an improved Service Quality strategy. This strategy aims to enhance customer service delivery and improve the experience around the services Council offers. During 2011 Council introduced a new branch called 'Service Quality' which will assist Council to become a more customer focused organisation, with the ability to meet customers needs.

Council's service improvement program is ongoing and consists of three main initiatives;

- "PhoneFox" - external mystery shoppers call a random sample of Council workers and score them against an established phone answering standard to ensure we are responsive to our customers when they contact us.
- Connecting Teams - groups representing each area of Council have been established to work to improve the service we provide both internally and to the community.
- Voice of our Customers - customer perception/satisfaction surveys are carried out for internal and external customers to understand what people think of the service we're providing. The Connecting teams then analyse these results and implement actions with the aim to improve the service experience.

Council also uses the results from the Community Satisfaction survey in our improvement strategies.

### Community Plan nears completion

The Community Plan is a legislative requirement on all Queensland Councils. CRC's plan is in the final stages of development and will direct all other strategic planning mechanism to achieve sustainability across all sectors of Council. Council will advocate with community, relevant industry sectors and state agencies to achieve sustainable outcomes across the region. Additionally in light of the Federal Governments recent future strategic direction, we will strive together to become a low carbon economy.

For further information regarding Council's programs and activities please visit Council's website <http://www.cairns.qld.gov.au>

Cairns Regional Council  
State of the Environment -  
Sustainability Scorecard Report  
2010/11



Golden Orchid, *Dendrobium discolor*