



Submission by the Gold Coast City Council

TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES INQUIRY BY THE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE INTO

Sustainable Cities 2025

October 2003

Inquiry into Sustainable Cities 2025

PART 1

Introduction

The Gold Coast City Council is pleased to make this submission to the new inquiry into *Sustainable Cities 2025*.

GCCC welcomes the stated intent of the inquiry into *Sustainable Cities 2025* to seek to identify current and future patterns of settlement, the sustainability issues associated with these settlement patterns, and how government policy might ensure that developed areas retain an Australian lifestyle without diminishing the future value of Australian eco-systems. These issues have been central considerations for the Gold Coast City Council, especially since its amalgamation in 1995, and Council welcomes the Federal Parliament's current interest.

Gold Coast City is now Australia's sixth largest city. It has a population of more than 450,000. More than 15,000 new residents are accommodated each year, making the Gold Coast Australia's fastest growing urban area. The Gold Coast also welcomes more than 4 million tourists every year, including 1 million international tourists: this places even greater pressure on the city's resources and its urban systems. This city is daily confronted with the challenge of promoting greater sustainability, while meeting the needs generated by its high rate of growth and its tourism focus. The recent experience of GCCC provides many examples of innovations in city management and leadership in addressing sustainability issues.

In this submission, GCCC identifies key actions in its approach to becoming a more sustainable city. It has made great progress in balancing rapid growth with conservation of the environment. GCCC's unusually large size and its propensity to confront its growth challenges in innovative ways provides many examples that will be instructive on a local, regional and national level.

GCCC is well experienced in identifying, scoping and undertaking major initiatives for more sustainable development. Despite its extraordinary urban growth, the Gold Coast has made major strides in improving its urban environment and in conserving its natural resources, particularly the values of the World Heritage hinterland, its waterways and the islands and estuaries of southern Moreton Bay.

In partnership with its community, its neighbouring Councils (including Tweed Shire in NSW) and the 18 Councils of the South East Queensland Regional Association of Councils, GCCC is well versed in the benefits of local and regional cooperation. These partnerships are essential to success in working towards sustainable cities. The Queensland State Government is obviously a major partner for GCCC in these endeavours. It is the role of the Commonwealth Government that has been lacking in recent years. The GCCC believes that, in common with other major growing areas it

has suffered from too little Government direction on urban development at the national level, given the lack of any coherent Commonwealth Government Cities Policy. More specifically, GCCC has felt that its particular needs as one of the Australia's largest cities have not been sufficiently recognised by the Commonwealth Government. This enquiry provides a welcome opportunity to address these concerns in the context of the sustainable development of the nation's cities.

Vision

It is essential that Australia formulates a national vision and a set of objectives for future city settlements, and for the management of the nation's major growth areas. In this way, a coordinated effort can be facilitated, at the national, state, regional and local levels for implementation of sustainable city initiatives. Without a high degree of coordination, the full benefits of the many worthy initiatives currently underway at these various levels of interest, will never be realised and sustained.

Like many other Cities, GCCC has articulated its vision for the future in its Corporate Plan. This has proved invaluable for providing a focus for the wider community and for informing all of the City's actions, programs, projects and services. Sadly, similar vision statements are not clearly evident at the State Government and Federal Government levels. As a positive start, a clear vision statement for sustainable cities is needed from the State and Federal Governments. The extensive community consultation undertaken by GCCC and by many of its regional neighbours can serve as models for developing such visions.

It is important to note that GCCC has incorporated sustainability principles, including Agenda 21, as an integral component of the recently completed Corporate Plan 2003-2007. Council has adopted and is implementing an LA21 Action Plan we call 'S.E.E the Future' (SEE stands for Society, Economy and Environment).

There is probably no single blueprint for a sustainable city. Australia's cities represent a fertile laboratory of new methods for city management and for sustainable development. Much work of international standing has already been undertaken by cities such as GCCC, often without much involvement or support from the State or Federal Governments. Imagine how much more could be achieved with the full and active commitment of these two better resourced levels of Government!

Inquiry Terms of Reference

The scope of the inquiry looking out to 2025 is welcomed. As a member of the South East Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils, (SEQROC) GCCC is participating in the SEQ 2021 regional planning review, looking at the planning for the SEQ region to 2021. Indeed, for individual planning items the time horizon extends out to 25 and thirty years into the future. Given the enormity of urban development processes, medium and long term planning is crucial to addressing urban sustainability.

With regard to the terms of reference for the enquiry, GCCC offers the following summary comments:

1. The environmental and social impacts of sprawling urban development;

There is abundant research material available on the costs and impacts of urban sprawl. The enquiry would be best served by informing itself of the key findings of such research and then moving swiftly to the most practical and effective measures for addressing such development and managing its impacts. Using urban sustainability considerations as a filter, the benefits and attractions of traditional 'suburban' development should be evaluated against the very clear limitations of low density residential growth on the fringes of Australia's cities. The obvious concerns can be listed as:

- inefficient use of available land for urban development,
- loss of valuable non-urban land (eg agricultural land or nature conservation habitat) to low density urban uses, and to the land price speculation caused by development for such urban uses
- the costs of providing urban services to low density suburbs distant from major service centres and from trunk infrastructure facilities.
- the traffic conflicts arising from settlement patterns almost totally reliant on the private car for transport purposes.
- The often high energy use, high water use, high waste generating and single purpose use (i.e. inflexible) characteristics of developments occurring in low density urban developments in fringe urban locations.
- The often low levels of social services, reduced social support and lack of opportunities for social interaction characteristic of low density residential development areas.
- The concentrations of persons and households of socio-economic disadvantage in fringe urban locations.
- Loss of local identity and a sense of place.

2. The major determinants of urban settlement patterns and desirable patterns of development for the growth of Australian cities;

The focus on the spatial determinants for the structure and arrangement of Australia's cities is welcome. However the dominant role of non-spatial financial incentives, industry practices and perceived market preferences must be acknowledged. Put bluntly, governments, industry financiers, developers and consumers find it much easier to deal with low density single purpose urban developments, that are easily defined into standard 'packages'. Despite the rhetoric, there are multiple disincentives for the achievement of higher density, multiple purpose, multiple use urban developments. The 'desirable patterns of development for new growth areas' are easy to identify: there are many award winning developments that can be used as examples. However a key focus would be an assessment of the relative difficulties of achieving such development when compared with the more traditional low density residential development. This should not be restricted to the development approval process, as to their credit, Council's have largely overhauled their planning requirements to now favour the more sustainable developments. Instead, the focus should be on all the other steps in the development process, from land acquisition, development financing, infrastructure provision, marketing and property sales.

3. **A ‘blueprint’ for ecologically sustainable patterns of settlement, with particular reference to eco-efficiency and equity in the provision of services and infrastructure;**

It is unlikely that the inquiry will reveal a blueprint for sustainable cities, at least in a spatial sense: all places have their own unique opportunities and challenges. There is no single urban pattern that will be more sustainable than all others. It may be more useful to identify certain thresholds for eco-efficiency and certain standards for urban services and urban infrastructure that all Australian cities can be assessed against in terms of their sustainability.

4. **Measures to reduce the environmental, social and economic costs of continuing urban expansion; and**

Useful measures to cope with continuing urban expansion will include at least three types of implementation ‘tool boxes’:

- Measures to limit urban expansion at the fringe, including urban growth boundaries and incentives for infill development and urban redevelopment.
- Measure for improved design and construction of new urban areas on the fringe of Australia’s cities, so that where non-urban land is converted to urban use it is done so efficiently.
- Measures to better service existing and future areas of low density development, including innovations in infrastructure provision and transport services.

5. **Mechanisms for the Commonwealth to bring about urban development reform and promote ecologically sustainable patterns of settlement.**

One of the key findings of the enquiry should be that the Commonwealth must become more directly engaged in the development of Australia’s cities. While the enquiry focuses on urban sprawl, this is just a symptom of the overall growth and development pressures facing Australia as one of the most urbanised nations on earth. Rather than simplistic solutions to the worst excesses of low density urban development, the Commonwealth should review land development processes and the financing and delivery of infrastructure so as to improve the quality of life for all Australians. Much good work has been done by Gold Coast City and other municipalities across Australia to work /towards a more sustainable future: the enquiry should identify, review and promote these good examples for urban sustainability.

PART 2

Examples from Gold Coast City:

The amalgamation of the former City of Gold Coast and Albert Shire, together with the introduction of Queensland's Integrated Planning Act 1997 (*IPA*) and the commencement of a Planning Scheme review triggered the need for a considerable body of research work and the formulation of new planning strategies for Gold Coast City. Since 1995, a suite of major studies has been undertaken by GCCC which have informed the preparation of the new Gold Coast Planning Scheme. "Our Living City" the Gold Coast Planning Scheme was adopted by Council on 6 June 2003 and came into operation on 18 August 2003. It introduces a new regime of planning and development control for the city, soundly based on principles of ecological sustainability. (The entire planning scheme can be viewed via the internet at www.goldcoastcity.com.au/planningscheme.)

Significant research and policy development work by GCCC since 1995 has augmented the planning studies undertaken for the two former schemes. Importantly, Council has taken up the opportunity provided by an amalgamated administration to address the more complex land use issues that pertain to a major urban agglomeration, undergoing rapid growth, and located within an area of very significant nature conservation and natural resource values.

The most important of the individual strategies and planning studies undertaken in this period are described below. Note that this is not intended to be an exhaustive list.

(a) Nature Conservation Strategy

The Gold Coast's physical character is defined by a backdrop of green rugged mountain ranges meeting golden coastal beaches. The result is a diversity of distinctive landforms, unique wildlife and impressive landscapes. Almost half the area of the City of Gold Coast is bushland or other natural areas. The *Nature Conservation Strategy (February 1998)* was undertaken by Council as a major initiative to produce a resource inventory of the City's natural areas and the flora and fauna supported by these areas. It was also intended to ecologically assess these natural areas, and to produce a strategy that seeks to achieve the long term protection and management of the City's nature conservation resources.

The intent of this strategy has been distilled to four essential elements:

- A functioning and viable conservation network
- Sensitive and safe land use development
- Appreciating nature
- Natural areas management

The value of the Strategy has been to properly document the biological richness of the City and to understand the distribution and vulnerability of its important habitat

types. The Strategy has highlighted the importance of the Gold Coast in Nature Conservation terms: it is claimed to be the most biologically diverse city in Australia.

The **Nature Conservation Strategy** has had an enormous influence on the policy content of the new Gold Coast Planning Scheme. The policy thrust has been to protect as far as possible the 5 large habitat systems identified for the City (see Map Sp-1 of the draft Planning Scheme) and with varying levels of control, promote the retention of the significant remnants and the important land and water based linkages between habitat areas. The strategy recognises that up to 25% of the total area of the City is of little or no conservation significance, or is recognised as being already committed to extensive development activity.

The spatial expression of the strategy has been incorporated in the scheme as Strategic Map SP-3. A series of codes contained within the scheme are largely based on the nature conservation research undertaken for the strategy: these include the Nature Conservation code, the Development in Natural Wetland Areas code and the Development Adjacent to Waterbodies code. The nature conservation research has also informed the preparation of many of the Local Area Plans: it is of particular relevance to the Guragunbah LAP, Springbrook LAP and the East/Coomera Yawalpah LAP, but has also been instrumental in the formulation of the more development oriented LAPs such as the Yatala LAP and the Coomera LAP. The **Nature Conservation Strategy** has been used to inform the structure planning of land included within the Emerging Communities domain, and has contributed to the formulation of the standard site planning and vegetation protection requirements included in most of the domains. A new initiative is the introduction of a Conservation domain to allow private land-owners to commit to the protection of nature conservation values on their land.

In summary, the **Nature Conservation Strategy** has been of fundamental importance in underpinning the policy direction embodied in the new Gold Coast Planning Scheme. Where a balance has been struck between development and nature conservation conflicts, the information provided on the relative nature conservation significance of land within the City has been used to help determine the appropriate level of development that should be allowed, if any. In some cases, this has meant the removal or reduction of existing development rights, for example the removal of park residential densities from parts of the southern valleys of Currumbin and Tallebudgera. In other cases it has meant a recognition that existing development commitments will significantly impact on important nature conservation values, and that sensitive development design is required to at least retain important linkages, for example in the Albert Corridor.

(b) Gold Coast Urban Heritage & Character Study December 1997

The Gold Coast is known as a predominantly modern City oriented towards tourism, leisure and recreation. The **Gold Coast Urban Heritage and Character Study (1997)** was a major initiative of Council to assess the cultural heritage values of the City and to provide a context for the protection and enhancement of these values. The Study revealed that the Gold Coast has a unique place in Australia's history and indeed has a distinctive character and heritage that is worthy of recognition and some protection. It has identified the Gold Coast as Australia premier 'post modern'

city, with an urban form and architecture that is oriented to lifestyle values, to fantasy and to the future, rather than the traditions of the past.

The approach taken in the study was innovative, reflecting the unusual circumstances of the Gold Coast. The consultation undertaken as part of the Study showed that while there was some attachment to individual buildings and places, the essential character of the Gold Coast related to change, and that the strategies for land use planning in regard to protecting character were more likely to be effective if they addressed the pace of change in different local areas, rather than the preservation of individual buildings.

The primary recommendation of the Strategy was to "embrace the difference" and promote the diversity of the heritage and character of the Gold Coast among its residents and visitors and look to ways to conserve the City's unique lifestyle, heritage and urban character. Secondary recommendations with a land use and development intent relate to undertaking investigations of 20th Century architectural history of the City and further developing the assessment of local character in the City's program of local area planning. The study provides a framework for considering the local character of City by, identifying 9 major 'character areas'. It also shows how these can be further detailed into local character areas, each with its own distinctive profile. These major character areas have some relationship to the major landforms of the City and the large habitat systems identified in the **Nature Conservation Strategy**, but they also reflect the varying impacts of historical development patterns on the City.

The Gold Coast Urban Heritage and Character Study has strongly influenced the urban form, built form and landscape provisions of the new Planning Scheme. Relevant planning measures are threaded throughout the whole Planning Scheme. The most obvious connections are with the following: The Urban Heritage and Character Strategy, The City Image and Townscape Strategy, the Tourism Strategy, the Cultural Heritage codes, and the 'place codes' contained in each domain and LAP.

This Study has been instrumental in giving weight to the local communities focus of the new Planning Scheme. It has underscored the importance of promoting local diversity within a consistent framework for the City.

(c) Gold Coast City Activity Centre Strategy April 1998

One of the more obvious 'gaps' to be filled in relation to the existing planning schemes was the development of a coherent system of major retail, office and service centres for the City. The proliferation of retail development, in particular had become a political issue and it was apparent that the pattern of commercial development resulting from the existing schemes was creating land use conflicts and an oversupply of shopping centres. The **Activity Centre Strategy** was commissioned by Council to rationalise the system of business centres in the City and to integrate this with Council's **Economic Development Strategy** and its obligations under the **RFGM**.

The **Activity Centre Strategy** introduced a number of important concepts that have been incorporated into the new Planning Scheme for the consideration of commercial development and the spatial allocation of economic development within the City.

These are:

- Support for the integration of economic activity in residential areas by promoting home-based business activity
- An activity centre hierarchy comprised of Key Regional Centres, Regional Centres, Sub-Regional Centres, and District Centres, with a stated range of activity and floorspace size for centres at each level of the hierarchy. (Local Centres and Neighbourhood Centres are considered to round out the system, but are not individually identified in the **Activity Centre Strategy**)
- Activity clusters that represent the agglomeration of employment based activities into local areas based on specialisations into particular industries, or to enhance particular service relationships between business activities. These activity clusters may include concentrations of industrial activity, educational facilities or tourist attractions.
- The progressive preparation and implementation of individual land use planning and development controls for all activity centres and important activity clusters within the City.

The **Activity Centre Strategy** has been directly expressed in the new Planning Scheme in the following objectives and planning measures: Activity Centre Strategy, Transport Strategy, Energy Conservation Strategy, City Image and Townscape Strategy, Major Activity Centres Land Use Theme, Industry Land Use Themes, Integrated Business Domain, Local Business Domain, Fringe Business Domain, Industry 1 Domain, Industry 2 Domain, Extractive Industry Domain, Marine Industry Domain, Office code, Retail Establishments code, Working From Home code, and the Town Centre LAPs.

The integration of transport and land use in the desired urban form of the future Gold Coast will be principally guided by the interaction of the planning measures in support of the Activity Centre Strategy and those intended to implement the Transport Strategy.

(d) City Transport Plan

The Gold Coast was one of the first of the SEQROC Councils to prepare a local version of the **Integrated Regional Transport Plan (IRTP)** developed as an initiative under the **RFGM**. The **Gold Coast City Transport Plan (September 1998)** seeks to provide an integrated high quality safe and efficient transport system to serve the needs of the Gold Coast in a sustainable manner throughout the 21st century. The **CTP** was prepared jointly with the State Government transport agencies to provide a 30-year master transport plan for the Gold Coast. It sets out specific transport targets for the City, based on the framework provided by the **RFGM** and the **IRTP**.

The **CTP** integrates initiatives for improvements to public transport, roads, air transport, water transport, cycling and pedestrian facilities into a comprehensive package that includes financial considerations and social and environmental objectives. The **CTP** makes a strong case for the effective integration of transport infrastructure with land use planning to produce an urban form that is more sustainable.

As noted for the other major policy initiatives described here, the *CTP* has strongly influenced the planning measures contained in the proposed Gold Coast Planning Scheme. It is most directly evident in the following: Infrastructure Provision and Sequencing Strategy, Transport Strategy, Activity Centres Strategy, Energy Conservation Strategy, City Image and Townscape Strategy, Airport Environs code, Car Parking code, Development on Service Roads code, Reconfiguring a Lot code, and all domain and LAP 'place codes'.

- (e) Resident Population Estimates for Gold Coast City (Comparative Analysis of the Population Accommodation Potential of the Current Zonings and the Strategic Plan) September 1997.

A key internal research paper undertaken as part of the Planning Scheme Review project was an assessment of the likely populations to be accommodated under the existing and proposed urban designated land of the combined Gold Coast and Albert Shire Planning Schemes. The assessment was limited to the land areas already zoned for residential or mixed-use purposes and to land designated in the Strategic Plan for a 'preferred dominant land use' which allows residential development but is not yet zoned for this purpose.

This investigation revealed that the resulting ultimate population to be accommodated would vary significantly according to the efficiency of land use that could be achieved. Provided the available zoned residential land is used efficiently and provided household sizes do not continue to decline, the Gold Coast will be able to accommodate enough residential dwellings to support a population of 900,600. A more conservative assessment suggests that the Gold Coast's residential zoned land will be able to accommodate 704,00 persons. Should the land be used even less efficiently, the total population to be accommodated will be 533,700 persons. Adding the residential land shown on the Strategic Plan but not yet zoned for residential use, these figures increase to a range of 1.2 million if all the land is used efficiently, to 950,000 if the land is used to a moderate efficiency, and 719,500 if the land is used inefficiently.

This assessment shows that the former planning schemes had allocated sufficient land to accommodate forecast population growth in the Gold Coast, until at least 2019, and much longer if residential development densities are increased substantially, in order to use the land more efficiently.

Subsequent work, including development modelling for the *Activity Centre Strategy* has suggested that land supplies will continue to be developed for relatively low densities. However the *Gold Coast Broad Hectare Study June 1999* undertaken by the State Government, which focuses on the availability of larger land parcels in infill and greenfields areas, found there is adequate residential land to cater for the projected population increase up to 2016. Nevertheless, the implications for the new Gold Coast Planning Scheme is that increased residential densities must be encouraged if only to conserve the take up of residential land.

The impact of this and subsequent investigations into residential land supply has meant that there is no overall increase in the total area of land to be designated for residential development purposes in the new Planning Scheme. There have been some minor increases of residential land in the northern parts of the City, specifically to the south and west of Beenleigh, in order to support its Key Metropolitan Centre

function, however these have been offset by the removal of urban residential development rights in the central and southern portions of the City. There has also been an overall loss of potential 'park living' land, as this was found to be in oversupply: extensive areas of the Tallebudgera and Currumbin Valleys have been reallocated to rural purposes.

This study has also influenced the policy for increasing residential densities in those parts of the City well placed to benefit from access to services and facilities, in particular transport services and employment opportunities. There has been a significant increase in residential densities in town centres, the areas surrounding town centres, and in well serviced areas such as the coastal strip.

(f) Gold Coast Community Health Plan (1997)

While the *Gold Coast Community Health Plan* was oriented towards the improved delivery of human services, and the application of educational and preventative strategies, its scope was such that many of its policy initiatives have relevance to land use planning, transport infrastructure and urban design. Indeed, the *Community Health Plan* consultation results show that transport and access to urban facilities are consistently rated as major factors in terms of health and well-being. Accordingly, a wide range of initiatives from the *Community Health Plan* have been used to direct the planning measures of the proposed Gold Coast Planning Scheme.

The Community Health Plan has been supported and augmented by the research publications produced by Council's Social Research Section. In particular, *Indexing Disadvantage: Using Aggregated Demographic Characteristics to Identify Geographic Disadvantage on the Gold Coast (September 1997)* and *Our Community A Social Profile of the Gold Coast (October 1999) (Second edition published in September 2003)* set out valuable information on the spatial distribution of social characteristics on the Gold Coast.

The most direct influence of the *Community Health Plan* on the Planning Scheme is in the following objectives and planning measures: the Activity Centre Strategy, Housing Strategy, Transport Strategy, Waste Management, Natural Hazards Strategy, Urban Heritage and Character Strategy, City Image and Townscape Strategy, Residential Development codes, Cultural Heritage codes, and Working from Home code.

(g) Housing Needs Assessment Gold Coast City (July 1998)

The Gold Coast City Council jointly sponsored this study by the Gold Coast Housing Network in 1998. The purpose of the report is to develop a more integrated and comprehensive approach to housing need in Gold Coast City. Among its recommendations are directions for land use planning measures to be implemented to ensure an appropriate housing mix in local areas that responds to identified local needs. It also promotes the use of regulatory measures in planning schemes to ensure the consideration of particular housing needs for special needs groups. The report seeks further action in terms of maintaining housing choice and housing affordability across the City with regard to the possible impact of sequencing requirements and possible land release mechanisms.

This report is reflected in the following planning scheme objectives and planning measures: Housing Strategy, Urban Heritage and Character Strategy, Residential Development codes, and Working from Home code.

(h) *Bushfire Management Strategy* (April 1998)

The spread of development into the Gold Coast hinterland has created concerns about the potential bushfire hazard and the risk of loss of life and property damage. The ***Bushfire Management Strategy*** was undertaken by Council to assist in land use and land management decision-making for bushland areas within the City. The Strategy identifies the location of potential bushfire hazard areas within the City and focuses on planning and development in these areas and on the management of Council administered land. The strategy also considers the role of fire in maintaining biological diversity, and the role of the community in fire management and bushfire awareness.

The ***Bushfire Management Strategy*** is a landmark study and has received State and National planning awards for excellence. It has produced specific planning measures for incorporation into the Gold Coast Planning Scheme.

The recommendations of the ***Bushfire Management Strategy*** are reflected directly in the Gold Coast Planning Scheme by the Natural Hazards Strategy, and by the Bushfire Management Areas code.

(i) *Gold Coast Land Slip Study* (September 1999)

The development hazard of steep slopes and unstable soils is a particular risk in the Gold Coast environment, particularly in relation to the Gold Coast Hinterland. The ***Gold Coast Land Slip Study*** was undertaken by Council to assist in land use and land management decision-making for land slip hazard areas within the City. The study involved the determination of potential landslip hazard areas within the City and introduced a hazard rating system for unstable soils. It has provided the basis for detailed planning measures contained within the new Gold Coast Planning Scheme.

The outcomes of the ***Gold Coast Land Slip Study*** are reflected directly in the Gold Coast Planning Scheme by the DEOs Soc 7, by the Natural Hazards Strategy, and by the Steep Slopes and Unstable Soils code.

(j) *Merrimac Carrara Floodplain Structure Plan* (October 1997)

This project was initiated by Council in 1996 to provide an integrated approach for planning and future management of the remaining undeveloped areas of the Merrimac/Carrara Floodplain. These remaining areas are critical in terms of providing significant flood storage volumes and allowing for the appropriate distribution of water along major flow paths through downstream residential areas to their respective outfalls. In recent years the floodplain land has been under increasing development pressure. Council also had the problem of old and inappropriate approvals to manage to ensure no increase in detriment to downstream properties. The outcome of this major consultative project is a structure planning

policy that balances the equity of the existing landowners, addresses environmental, land use and hydraulic issues and represents the wider community's interests, while also seeking to provide a unique opportunity to protect the floodplain's role as a visual green heart to the City.

The floodplain management issue has been one of the most challenging planning initiatives undertaken by the Council. The opportunity to tackle the issue in an integrated way was afforded by the 1995 Council amalgamation, which brought the whole floodplain system under a single administration.

The *Merrimac Carrara Floodplain Structure Plan* is a landmark project and has received State and National planning awards for excellence. It has since been successfully defended in major land development court cases, and has produced specific planning measures for incorporation into the Gold Coast Planning Scheme.

The outcomes of the *Merrimac Carrara Floodplain Structure Plan* are reflected directly in the Gold Coast Planning Scheme by the Natural Hazards Strategy, by the Flood Affected Areas code, the Development Adjacent to Waterbodies code, the Development in Natural Wetland Areas code, the Changes to Ground Level code, and the Guragunbah LAP.

(k) Gold Coast City Landscape Strategy (July 1999)

This strategy has been developed to promote an integrated design approach for development works where design and layout of hard and soft landscape elements and landscape construction is based on clear philosophy and guidelines related to City Image and character, technical requirements, information and education. It is closely related to the *Urban Heritage and Character Study* described above. The preparation of the strategy has entailed an identification and assessment of the key components of the City image, their translation to local character areas and expression in landscape works design and construction.

The outcomes of the *Gold Coast City Landscape Strategy* are reflected directly in the Gold Coast Planning Scheme by the Urban Heritage and Character Strategy, the City Image and Townscape Strategy, the Landscape Works code, Cultural Heritage codes and by the domain and LAP 'place codes'.

(l) Northern Wastewater Strategy 1997

The northern region of the Gold Coast, between the Coomera and Logan Rivers was recognised as an area to accommodate substantial residential growth and major new industrial development. Council undertook the *Northern Wastewater Strategy* to provide an integrated approach to the challenge of collection, treatment, reuse and disposal of wastewater in an ecologically sustainable manner. The principles underlying the Strategy were to deliver high treatment standards including tertiary plus filtration, to promote the beneficial reuse of water and to minimise the amount of water the community extracts from the environment and subsequently returns after a single use.

The Strategy recommended that the use of reclaimed water could be promoted through regenerating wetlands to enable the rehabilitation of degraded lands, and to help address acid sulfate soil runoff problems while providing additional wildlife habitat, and the use of reclaimed water for irrigation of public open spaces and canelands and where possible industrial reuse.

The Strategy was a major consultation initiative for the Council and demonstrated that an integrated approach to infrastructure facilities and services has the potential to deliver multiple benefits to the community.

The experience obtained through the preparation of the **Northern Wastewater Strategy** has influenced the development approach promoted by the new Gold Coast Planning Scheme. This is reflected in the following objectives and planning measures: the Infrastructure Provision and Sequencing Strategy, Waste Management Strategy, Natural Resources Strategy, Development Adjacent to Waterbodies code, Development in Natural Wetland Areas Code, Waste Management Code, and the Water Cycle Management Code.

(m) Hinze Dam Catchment Management Plan (September 1996)

This **Catchment Management Plan** was prepared by Council to manage and protect the important water resources of the Hinze Dam catchment. The primary aim of the Plan is to protect and improve the quality of water held in storage in the Hinze and Little Nerang Dams, and secondarily, to provide and encourage recreational facilities within the catchment that are compatible with the major objective of water supply protection.

The Hinze and Little Nerang Dams are the major sources of water supply for the City of Gold Coast. The Plan makes recommendations for the management of agriculture, urban development, rural residential and community use in the catchment area. The principal land use concern is that future land use and development within the catchment is planned and located so that impacts on natural areas and watercourses are minimised.

The **Catchment Management Plan** has been expressed in the new Gold Coast Planning Scheme in a number of ways. It is implemented in the following objectives and planning measures: the Infrastructure Provision and Sequencing Strategy, Waste Management Strategy, Natural Resources Strategy, Development Adjacent to Waterbodies code, Development in Natural Wetland Areas Code, Waste Management Code, and the Water Cycle Management Code.

(n) State of the Environment Report Benchmark '97

To achieve its City Vision as a sustainable City, Council has established a system for regular monitoring and reporting on the environment (both built and natural). State of the Environment reporting (**SoER**) has been developed to provide a benchmark for monitoring and measuring environmental indicators and for tracking progress towards environmental targets and goals. The **Benchmark 97** report identified the following major themes for measurement and monitoring on the Gold Coast: Air, Land, Water, Biodiversity, Noise, Waste, Heritage and Socio-economic indicators.

This report has been produced with considerable public input. It is Council's intent to maintain the *SoER* process as a transparent one, with extensive opportunities for community participation, in order to increase public awareness for environmental management issues. The *SoER* process is also intended to support the review of the Planning Scheme's performance, consistent with the *IPA* requirements for performance indicators. The *State of the Environment Report* is directly related to the planning scheme performance indicators included in Part 2 of the new Gold Coast Planning Scheme.

(o) Local Area Planning Program (1998) (reviewed in February 2003)

Council has embarked upon a coordinated program of local area planning, involving residents, local business and relevant state and federal agencies. A 5-year rolling program has been adopted, aimed at addressing specific land use issues throughout the City. The key objectives of the program include:

- to coordinate and integrate local planning initiatives across Council;
- to manage the development and redevelopment of key local areas;
- to enable the community and stakeholders to effectively contribute to the long term planning of their local area; and
- to establish an integrated approach to the planning and development of local areas which encompasses the relevant physical, social, economic, environmental and cultural factors.

The Local Area Planning program represents an attempt to maximise the efficient use of Council resources. It also seeks to implement the principles of Ecological Sustainability, while achieving a local area focus that is more likely to effectively engage people through consultation and participation in local initiatives.

This 'local' orientation has been informed by much of the strategy development work described here and the enthusiastic response of residents and local business people to the opportunities offered by local area planning projects. The principles of local area planning have been well entrenched into the new Gold Coast Planning Scheme. The most obvious and direct relationship is the individual Local Area Plans included in Part 6 of the Planning Scheme.

(p) Local Area Plans and related studies

During the Planning Scheme Review period, Council has finalised a series of discrete planning projects for town centres, newly urbanising areas, and other local area planning initiatives. Much of this work has been incorporated directly into the new Gold Coast Planning Scheme as 'stand alone' Local Area Plans. The number and range of LAPs included in the new scheme emphasises the strong orientation of land use planning and development control on the Gold Coast to the local community level, informed by a comprehensive City and regional policy framework.

(q) Other Related Studies

As noted above, the new Gold Coast Planning Scheme has been informed by a very extensive range of local research studies and new strategies. While not all can be described in detail, further examples worth recording include:

- *The Gold Coast Economic Development Strategy (August 1997)*
- *The Acid Sulfate Soils Policy (1997)*
- *The Gold Coast Management of Coastal Dune Areas Policy (March 1998)*
- *The Gold Coast Harbour Study (1998)*
- *Pacific Innovation Corridor Strategy (1998)*
- *Cities for Climate Protection Initiatives (2000)*

Gold Coast was one of the first Australian Councils to reach Milestone 5 in the Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) program. Since reaching this milestone Council has been further involved in CCP programs such as the Renewables Alliance Program, whereby Gold Coast has been sharing its greenhouse-abatement learning with other councils throughout Australia. Key greenhouse gas abatement measures include:

- Electricity generated from landfill gas in a ground-breaking agreement with ENERGEX. Council's four largest landfill sites have a total of 3.5 Megawatts of electricity generators installed. Methane gas from the landfill is used to fire the generators and produce 'green power'.
- Disposal of green waste, and re-use of treated effluent at the Rocky Point Sugar Cane Mill. This initiative significantly reduces the amount of green waste going to landfill and results in the generation of 'green power' that is either used by the Mill or sold to the community.
- Promotion of environmentally friendly local industries and businesses at the Green Machines Expo.
- Implementation of energy efficiency measures throughout Council's largest energy using sector, water pumping and treatment.
- Council is jointly funding, with Griffith University and private industry, a research project to develop a water turbine that can produce electricity from water flows previously considered too slow for electricity generation.

PART 3

City Infrastructure and the Role of State and Federal Governments:

Gold Coast City has embarked on an ambitious program of major infrastructure developments, largely based on the work described above. These new infrastructure projects are aimed at increasing the sustainability of the growing city, and constitute a real stretch for the City. Simply put, GCC does not have the funding resources to adequately meet the infrastructure needs of Australia's fastest growing city. This highlights that active cooperation of all levels of government is essential to the achievement of sustainable cities.

Gold Coast City is concerned that not enough recognition is given to the need for the infrastructure as the City grows. Accordingly, the GCCC has initiated the "City Image and Infrastructure Funding Strategy" (CIIFS). The aim of the project is to present an accurate profile of Gold Coast City, and in doing so dispel some of the myths that may exist.

The CIIFS supporting report, commissioned by the GCCC and prepared by the University of Queensland and KPMG consortium, is entitled "Gold Coast Innovation City 2002 - Gold Coast City's Position in the State National Economies", and aims to answer common questions as well as to quantify Gold Coast City's position in the State and National economies.

Gold Coast City has been Australia's standout performer in terms of population growth over the past twenty five years. As KPMG's Bernard Salt has highlighted, the rapid population growth experienced by GCC "is evidence of the Australian penchant for lifestyle: a beach environment, access to a capital city job market, retirement destination, warm climate ... all that Gold Coast has to offer".

Despite the glamorous reputation of the tourist strip, the findings of the demographic and economic analysis show that infrastructure development, (both economic and social) has not kept pace with population growth and as a result the City is now suffering from some serious growing pains. Now is the time to not only play catch-up but to also plan for the future and make wise investment decisions which will ensure the sustainable growth of the City.

To progress its major infrastructure and city building projects, GCCC needs the active support of both State and Commonwealth Governments. A selection of relevant major projects is described below:

Light rail

The public transport system on the Gold Coast is a privately owned bus system, operating under an exclusive State franchise, with a relatively small (about \$6m per annum) subsidy from the State. Public transport plays a relatively small role in the City, providing for about 3% of all trips. As the City grows, it is becoming increasingly difficult to meet the increasing transport demands for private motoring, because of the inability to expand the road system, particularly in the more heavily developed coastal strip.

The City Transport Plan (1998) proposes a greatly increased use of public transport, with a fast and comfortable light rail system to attract people to public transport.

The light rail will operate in a limited number of corridors, mainly linking developments along the coast and connecting to the railway line at a few inland centres. Feeder buses would continue to serve the less intensely developed areas of the City, feeding to the light rail at major interchange nodes.

A joint State/Council feasibility study for the light rail is being conducted. This is being funded equally by the Commonwealth and State governments and will be completed late in 2003. The most difficult issue for the study is to determine how the project might be funded, because the other major feasibility issues (patronage, traffic impacts, environmental impacts) appear to be positive for the project.

Tugun Bypass

The Gold Coast Highway from Tugun to Kirra is currently the most congested road within the Gold Coast region, with long delays to traffic through most days and every weekend. This road provides access to local land uses and the Gold Coast Airport. The 7km long Tugun Bypass will complete construction of the Pacific Motorway as a high-standard interstate route for regional traffic movements between South East Queensland and North East NSW. The Bypass will enable the separation of higher-speed longer-distance interstate and regional traffic movements, away from the coastal corridor, where slower, local traffic will predominate.

This will enable redevelopment to occur along the existing highway corridor, where the resultant traffic environment will be more conducive to local traffic, public transport and pedestrian/cycle movements, without the impact of major regional and interstate traffic flows.

The environmental studies required to meet Queensland, NSW and Commonwealth legislation are underway, but will require some time yet to be completed and assessed. At best, it could be perhaps five years (i.e. 2008) before the bypass might be in operation. Until that time, traffic conditions in the area will continue to deteriorate, as there are no other routes reasonably available for this traffic.

Water Supply: Gold Coast Water futures Concept

In planning for a more sustainable future, GCCC has embarked on a major "Waterfutures" concept for the city. By diversifying our water supply and working with the community, GCCC will secure a more sustainable future. The Waterfutures concept is a distinctive and easily recognised way of identifying projects and programs that focus on the long-term sustainability for the City's water supply. At the heart of the Waterfutures work is a technical process calculating the yield of existing and planned surface water storages, and the latest information on a safe (reliable) yield. The future direction of GCCC water supply planning is one of achieving a balance- a balance between our available water resources, the level of demand we as a community place on them, and environmental requirements. To achieve this balance, a combination of traditional bulk water supplies, such as dams and new water management innovations, must be implemented. Council is keen to develop a diversity of supply as a part of its water management strategy. The current drought has highlighted the risks of relying on a single water supply source.

Pimpama Coomera Water Futures Project

This is a major 'trial' project that is investigating more sustainable approaches for the provision and management of water resources in the Pimpama Coomera area,

one of the development 'hotspots' on the Gold Coast, with a future population of around 70,000 people. This has involved exhaustive research into best practice urban design to reduce water consumption. This has included consideration of dual reticulation systems, incorporation of rainwater tanks, impervious paving, swales in landscape design and other water sensitive urban design principles. This project will result in urban development that require 80% less water from dams.

Council is now finalising the initial investigations and is ready to pilot some of the recommendations of the project through local statutory controls and design requirements. All new development in the Pimpama Coomera area will be required to provide a dual water reticulation system. Dual water reticulation is the supply of both drinkable and recycled water via separate reticulated systems. Recycled water is highly treated water suitable for re-use. The new standards also require reduced infiltration gravity sewers (so called "Smart" sewers) which are waste water systems designed on lower flow rates based on reducing the amount of stormwater and groundwater that can enter the wastewater system.

Flood Mitigation

The Nerang River Flood Mitigation Advisory Committee was established by GCCC in 2002 to make recommendations to Council regarding preferred flood mitigation options for the Nerang River catchment, the major urban area of the City, where a 1 in 100 year flood could affect some 4,100 properties. The advisory committee has been through an exhaustive process over the last 18 months of reviewing technical results of hydraulic modelling, economic analysis, environmental considerations, legislative requirements and most importantly seeking out community opinion in relation to both potential flooding and the proposed flood mitigation options. It is likely to propose a multi-million dollar suite of flood mitigation infrastructure projects. The equitable funding of these mitigation projects is a pressing concern for GCCC.

The Role of Regional Planning:

The Gold Coast City is an active participant in the South East Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (SEQROC) regional planning initiative, first established in December 1990. Please note that the Commonwealth Government has maintained an interest and has some representation in the SEQ regional planning project.

The SEQ 2001 project was created to plan for and accommodate the rapid urban growth pressures being experienced in the south east Queensland region. This project resulted in *the Regional Framework for Growth Management (RFGM)* which is intended to guide the development of the region in an integrated manner. The *RFGM* was first released in 1994 and formally adopted by the participating Governments in December 1995. It has since been reviewed and updated in 1996 and 1998. The *RFGM* sets out a wide range of initiatives and nominates individual authorities and agencies for the implementation of particular strategies. It is anticipated that local government planning schemes will be the implementation vehicles for many of these *RFGM* initiatives. The new *Gold Coast Planning Scheme* contains many planning measures that derive directly and indirectly from the *RFGM*. This is in compliance with Council's responsibilities under the *RFGM* and its associated initiatives auspiced by the State Government and the SEQROC group of Councils.

The current review of the Regional Plan, the SEQ2021 project, is a three year project to comprehensively overhaul the regional planning framework for South East Queensland. The project is just over half way through and is anticipated to be completed towards the end of 2004.

PART 4

Discussion Points

The Concept of Sustainable Cities

No city can be sustainable of itself. The Gold Coast is one of Australia's largest major cities, with a considerable non-urban hinterland that is fertile and productive. However even the Gold Coast is not self-sufficient in terms of its food production, energy production, water supply, raw materials production, employment needs, social service needs, health services, educational needs, entertainment and recreation needs.

It is more sensible to think about sustainable city regions, and of course sustainable States and a sustainable nation. Nevertheless, all cities can strive to improve their sustainability: settlement patterns and eco-efficiency are important areas for such improvement. These are definitely worth investigating and promoting.

Australia's cities are well placed to respond to grass roots community concerns about the environment and to respond in a sensitive manner to the unique context of the Australian landscape. However with only some 4% of the national income base allocated to Local Government, major funding and resource assistance is needed from the State and Commonwealth governments to advance these sustainable city initiatives and programs.

The sustainable city of the future is about achieving a balance; it is the fast growing cities that have the greatest challenges in this regard. They need active assistance so that they can retain the biodiversity of Australia, have a developed infrastructure that gives efficient and equitable access to services and utilities, preserve the essentials of the 'Australian lifestyle' and contribute to the economic wealth of the nation.

The key components for a sustainable city

In the Inquiry discussion paper, there are described several components of a sustainable city. The following notes indicate the GCCC approach to addressing these visionary objectives for the Australian sustainable city.

1. Preserve bushland, significant heritage and urban green zones.

The Gold Coast Nature Conservation Strategy referred to above, has resulted in a suite of initiatives for GCCC in preserving its bushland areas. The Urban Heritage and Character Study has provided the basis for further work on identifying and conserving important heritage and character values for Gold Coast City.

Perhaps the most significant recent achievement for nature conservation in Gold Coast City has been the Open Space Preservation Levy Acquisition program. In two major phases since 1999, more than 20 million dollars has been expended by Gold Coast City from its ratepayer funded green levy to purchase over 2,500 hectares of land for nature conservation purposes. A further 12.3 million dollars is currently committed to further purchases under this program.

Questions for Consideration

- ***Does the inclusion of green zones within city planning result in further urban sprawl, which has a greater detrimental effect for the environment by encroaching on more surrounding bushland?***

No. It is essential that planning schemes clearly show the extent of the urban footprint, with a clear demarcation of where urban development will not be allowed. However it is also important for important green areas within the urban area, such as riparian corridors, green wedges, coastal areas, ridgelines and important local habitats are adequately protected. Any decision on competing land uses must be informed by a careful analysis of the relative values of the land for urban development and for habitat protection and nature conservation.

- ***What are the possible impacts of either increasing or limiting the proportion of bushland and urban green zones?***

The most sensible outcome is one that promotes greater certainty for future development. While there is no magical formula that applies to all cities, it should be possible to establish benchmarks for proportions of open space that should be protected both within urban areas, and in their immediate hinterlands. It is the relationship of urban development to open space that is important, not just the extent of urban sprawl. .

- ***Can green zones be multi-purpose - serving the recreational and social needs of city dwellers while also providing habitat and environmental benefits for native flora and fauna?***

Yes. However the role and function of each major open space area should be clearly articulated in its management plan, to allow proper resolution of possible land use and activity conflicts.

- ***Is it appropriate to provide incentives to encourage partnership arrangements with land holders and developers to preserve remnant vegetation on private lands?***

Definitely yes. GCCC operates a number of programs to encourage private landholders to preserve bushland. These include “Land For Wildlife”, Conservation Covenants, and Voluntary Conservation Agreements, where rate relief and other incentives are offered to landowners who agree to have their property zoned for conservation protection. Highlights include

- Inclusion of over 250 landowners in the Land For Wildlife Scheme. This is the greatest number of registrations of any City or Shire in Queensland. Gold Coast City Council offers 100 free native plants to LfW property owners under the unique ‘Plants for Wildlife’ Program.
- Gold Coast City Council offers a relatively new scheme to the City’s landowners whose properties support significant ecological values. This program is called the Voluntary Conservation Agreement Scheme which enables landowners to enter into a legally binding conservation agreement with Council in return for significant financial and in-kind incentives up to 100% of rates remitted and up to \$2000 per annum provided for land management expenses. Currently 6 landowners are involved in the Scheme protecting nearly 420 hectares.
- ***How do we ensure that preserved sites of built heritage are culturally valued and appropriately integrated into planned developments?***

The Gold Coast Planning Scheme provides that identified heritage buildings and sites must be conserved in any new development proposal. However there is also scope for development bonuses and other incentives to be applied, at Council’s discretion, where a special effort has been made to incorporate heritage and/or character elements into new development.

- ***How do we ensure that public green zones are integrated into new developments?***

The Gold Coast Planning Scheme requires that appropriate open space is provided in major new development proposals. This is obviously most relevant to large land subdivision proposals. Council has recently overhauled its open space requirements as part of a new Infrastructure Charges Planning Scheme Policy. This new policy aligns open space as an important infrastructure item, like roads or water supply. The new policy allows for land to be given up for open space, or for an equivalent monetary contribution to allow for the purchase or enhancement of open space in another location nearby.

2. Ensure equitable access to and efficient use of energy, including renewable energy sources.

Questions for Consideration

- ***How might we implement a shift from the existing large-scale energy generation and distribution infrastructure towards an alternative model?***

This is a significant challenge. At the local government level, it is useful to think about the incentives that could be applied to allow alternative energy production within and adjacent to urban areas. With a review of regulatory mechanisms, including State and Federal requirements, it should be possible to promote a significant increase in localised energy production.

- ***How can the uptake of renewable energy for residential and commercial properties be promoted?***

Once any regulatory impediments have been removed, the major area for assistance with uptake of renewable energy will be the financial benefits of doing so.

GCCC is involved in a joint project with Brisbane City Council, the Department of Housing and others to develop a Sustainable Housing Code aimed at enhancing the quality of housing through reducing energy consumption, reducing water consumption, ensuring a safe and secure environment and promoting 'Universal Design' that will allow people to stay in their home as they grow older.

- ***What are the impediments to utilising renewable energy sources in residential, commercial and industrial areas and how might these be addressed?***

There is already significant work underway to promote renewable energy use in new development. This needs to be further supported. The Gold Coast Planning Scheme allows for development bonuses where ESD principles have been incorporated into the development design. The intent is to reward good design and innovation in energy use.

- ***Should renewable energy generation be promoted at the single dwelling level or across city regions?***

Both. The benefits are likely to be incremental, and substantial over time.

- ***Are there economic, and hence social, implications of a city increasing its use of green power and developing new complexes which are predominantly self-sufficient in terms of energy generation?***

By definition, any city that increases its self sufficiency in terms of energy generation is a more sustainable city.

- *Should higher efficiency standards be mandated for all new dwellings, appliances and business operations?*

Yes. This is already underway in Queensland. However there is great scope and community and industry interest in extending the requirements for energy efficiency and for ‘raising the bar’ in terms of acceptable standards.

- *How can residential and commercial developments incorporate renewable energy generation into planning and construction?*

There are already award winning examples of new buildings and major development that incorporate energy generation. These could be reviewed and promoted widely to encourage further innovation in this area.

- *To what extent should public transport systems seek to change to renewable energy sources?*

Any increase in reliance on renewable energy systems by public transport is welcomed. While there are current limitations on the use of renewable energy for mass transit, this is an important challenge for achieving more sustainable cities.

3. Establish an integrated sustainable water and stormwater management system addressing capture, consumption, treatment and re-use opportunities.

GCCC is currently reviewing its ‘water balance’ and future water needs in response to the recent drought experience and to the continued high rate of the city’s growth. GCCC has committed to innovative water re-use initiatives, and to continuing its water wise and ‘watch every drop’ programs to manage water consumption in a sustainable manner.

With its Northern Waste Water Strategy (referred to above) GCCC has committed to no ocean outfall and to the comprehensive reuse and recycling of waste water in the City’s major growth corridor to the north. GCCC is committed to a significant change in water management methods alongside the changed settlement patterns of new urban development.

Questions for Consideration

- *Should cities of the future be looking to develop more localised small scale systems of urban water management?*

Yes, provided this is managed within an overall regional strategic context.

- ***What scale of residential water management systems is most efficient and sustainable?***

There is no single standard solution: all cities are different. However there is value in identifying benchmark performance measures for urban water management systems.

- ***How do we transform existing developed city areas into more sustainable water management systems?***

The GCCC experience is that it will require significant investment in infrastructure and cannot be funded solely from new development or redevelopment. Special funding arrangements are needed to redesign and overhaul water management systems in existing built up areas.

- ***How do we encourage areas to abandon existing waste water systems, which may discharge to the ocean or other waterways, in favour of alternative waste water treatment methods?***

From the GCCC experience it is clear that the most effective vehicle for change in waste water arrangements is extensive community and industry consultation about sustainable futures. There is deep support for sustainable outcomes in waste water treatment in the wider community. Harnessing this support can be effective in making commitments to major new investments and initiatives for waste water management. The Northern Waste water Strategy was strongly endorsed by the whole Gold Coast community. The Pimpama-Coomera Water Futures Project has achieved impressive support from industry, who are aware that it is not only the desirable way forward from an environmental viewpoint, but has significant economic and financial benefits as well.

- ***What incentives or market based instruments might be appropriate for residential and commercial enterprises to encourage responsible water consumption and re-use?***

GCCC, like many other cities has adjusted its water pricing policies to encourage more sustainable water use and to promote re-use. In tandem with an extensive public education and consultation program, this has proven to be very effective and well supported. GCCC operates a Water Wise education program, together with a Water Saving Incentive Rebate Scheme.

- ***Are more standards and guidelines needed for new development to minimise waste and storm water and to maximise capture and re-use opportunities?***

As noted above, much work is already underway in this regard, and GCCC is a major player in new water management systems. A whole suite of initiatives is being trialled, and should be reviewed and endorsed as the way forward. New standards and guidelines are only part of the answer.

4. Manage and minimise domestic and industrial waste.

GCCC has embarked on a number of projects seeking to achieve more sustainable outcomes in terms of its waste management practises. GCCC fully supports the need to think global and act local. It is agreed that environmental accountability must be driven by a national agenda, and that the sustainable city must promote local responsibility for production processes and their environmental impacts.

GCCC is fully aware of the need to increase efficiency in waste management, reduce the volume of waste and manage more appropriately that waste through treatment and recycling.

Questions for Consideration

- ***How does a sustainable city bring about attitudinal change and encourage its inhabitants to accept greater responsibility for waste minimisation and management?***

GCCC is fully committed to providing leadership to its community on waste management initiatives. However it must be emphasised that there is deep support for these sort of initiatives among industry as well as the wider community. GCCC is also aware of the potential for ‘green industries’ to be developed around the treatment of waste and the production of materials for recycling.

- ***What types of industry are appropriately located within cities, and how do sustainable cities respond to production processes and waste treatments that exist to meet city consumption patterns but occur outside of city limits?***

It is important that a variety of employment is available within the built up area; industrial jobs are an important part of the city, and Gold Coast City welcomes new industries to locate in its designated industrial and commercial areas. As a city renowned for its tourism attractions and lifestyle, GCCC is well aware of the need to ensure that it’s industries has little or no adverse environmental impacts. Sustainable cities need jobs, and clean industries provide good jobs for our local population.

The second part of the question needs to be answered from a national focus. Just as individual cities cannot be sustainable in themselves, it is important that all activities across the nation, whether located in urban areas or outside them, seek to become more sustainable. Industry practises, government regulation and consumer preferences should all be working towards more sustainable practises.

- ***What strategies are appropriate to encourage eco-efficiency and the reduction of domestic waste?***

There is already much work underway in this area. It needs to be reviewed, and promoted as an encouragement to others. Industry practises, government regulation and consumer preferences can all play a part in encouraging the reduction of domestic wastes.

- ***What strategies are appropriate to encourage eco-efficiency and the reduction of industrial waste?***

There is already much work underway in this area. It needs to be reviewed, and promoted as an encouragement to others. Industry practises, government regulation and consumer preferences can all play a part in encouraging the reduction of industrial wastes.

- ***Are there economic impacts for a sustainable city in dictating higher environmental standards and waste treatment?***

GCCC is of the view that there are clear economic advantages for a city that requires high standards for environment protection and for waste treatment. The Northern Waste Water Strategy is just one example of this philosophy in practice.

- ***What is the role of industry in ensuring sustainable cities, and what incentives or standards are appropriate to achieve this?***

Industry is a key partner in the achievement of sustainable cities. GCCC is encouraged by the interest and enthusiasm shown by most industry sectors in achieving improved standard and more sustainable practices.

- ***How can industry be encouraged to be more socially and environmentally responsible, and to work in partnerships with local communities?***

GCCC's experience is that industry is very keen to be involved in Council projects and to engage with the local community. GCCC is please to be able to provide a facilitator role in this regard.

5. Develop sustainable transport networks, nodal complementarity and logistics.

The Gold Coast City Transport Plan has directly confronted the enormous challenge presented by this growing City's transport needs. Multiple initiatives are currently underway to improve the transport future and to provide for a more sustainable city. A key finding is that Council alone has nowhere near enough funding to meet the future transport needs of the Gold Coast. In terms of transport infrastructure and

services the full cooperation and participation of both the State and Federal Governments is of utmost importance.

Questions for Consideration

- ***What initiatives can assist in the reduction of automobile dependence?***

The key interventions are in improving transport options and choices and reducing need for car based travel. Integrated mixed use urban areas, with good infrastructure for walking and cycling are positive inducements for more sustainable travel choices. Good public transport with frequent and reliable services is another obvious initiative, even though this has significant funding demands.

In Gold Coast City, more than 9% of households do not have access to a private car; this underlines the need to provide greater transport options throughout the City.

- ***Should new transport technologies, such as electric cars and buses, be promoted as alternative to conventional fuels?***

Yes. A more sustainable future will need a wide variety of transport innovations.

- ***What are the features needed in new settlement areas to encourage more diverse and sustainable transport networks?***

As noted above, integrated mixed use urban areas, with good infrastructure for walking and cycling are positive inducements for more sustainable travel choices. This applies to new areas just as it does to the established inner city areas that are traditionally better serviced for transport mode choice.

- ***What is the role of federal government in assisting metropolitan areas to restructure transport networks in line with more sustainable settlement patterns?***

As noted above in relation to the Tugun Bypass Project and the Gold Coast Light Rail project, Gold Coast City cannot fund these major infrastructure items from its own rate base alone: it needs the active involvement of State and Commonwealth Governments to make infrastructure of this scale a reality.

- ***What are the needs of transport systems for them to be equitable, accessible and economically viable?***

The key consideration is integration: over reliance on one transport mode cannot meet the needs of the future. Investment and effort is required over a variety of transport modes. This builds in a durable flexibility into the urban system.

- ***Is a more decentralised nodal type of transport network appropriate for commuter and traveller needs?***

The Gold Coast is a linear and multi-nuclei city. This type of city structure can be a sustainable one, with appropriate infrastructure. The concept of decentralised nodes acting as local transport hubs is a good one, and again this is more flexible than the traditional central CBD model with radial services only.

- ***What are the transport logistic needs of industry and how can these be managed in a sustainable city?***

Industry has a wide variety of transport needs, so a diverse system with built in flexibility is the more sustainable way forward. Obviously special planning is required for the freight transport task, particularly in terms of access to major distribution centres, shipping services and airports.

6. Incorporate eco-efficiency principles into new buildings and housing

GCCC fully supports the incorporation of better practices into new construction.

Questions for Consideration

- ***How can green construction and refurbishment techniques be integrated into standard building practices?***

There is already significant work underway to promote ESD construction techniques use in new development. This needs to be further supported. The Gold Coast Planning Scheme allows for development bonuses where ESD principles have been incorporated into the development design. The intent is to reward good design and innovation in energy use.

The ongoing focus needs to be on national building codes and on industry codes of practice to progressively 'raise the bar' for these sorts of initiatives.

- ***How can eco-efficiency innovations be promoted to achieve a market value in both commercial and residential buildings?***

The community needs to be made better aware of available choices. The use of display projects and special promotions is an ideal way to build market acceptance and market preference for green building techniques.

- ***What are the impediments to eco-efficiency principles being taken up across new housing developments and commercial areas?***

This is a significant challenge. At the local government level, it is useful to think about the incentives that could be applied to promote new ESD building innovations. With a review of regulatory mechanisms, including State and Federal requirements, it should be possible to promote a significant increase in eco-efficiency principles being taken up. GCCC is working in the following ways, by way of

- Providing support for the Currumbin Valley Eco-Village, an environmentally friendly rural-residential development that will be a world class eco-village.
- Joint project with Brisbane City Council, the Department of Housing and others to develop a Sustainable Housing Code aimed at enhancing the quality of housing through reducing energy consumption, reducing water consumption, ensuring a safe and secure environment and promoting 'Universal Design' that will allow people to stay in their home as they grow older.
- ***What type of incentives or standards for new developments might be appropriate to encourage more sustainable residential complexes?***

There is already significant work underway to promote more sustainable residential development. This needs to be further supported. The Gold Coast Planning Scheme allows for development bonuses where ESD principles have been incorporated into the development design. The intent is to reward good design and innovation in energy use.

- ***Are existing building standards and product labelling sufficient to enable informed consumer choices and to ensure that the use of eco-efficiency materials and designs are maximised?***

The community needs to be made better aware of available choices. The use of display projects and special promotions, mentioned above, can be very effective. Product labelling and industry endorsements are another way to build market acceptance and market preference for green building techniques.

7. Develop urban plans that accommodate lifestyle and business opportunities

Gold Coast City seeks to make the most effective use of its existing urban form, and to require new development to add strength and diversity to the existing city. The new Gold Coast Planning scheme promotes a variety of development densities throughout the urban area, as well as a system of mixed use centres to provide services and jobs, concentrated areas for special employment such as industrial areas and entertainment precincts. This overall city planning is informed by the regional planning work that has been done for the SEQ region, integrating Gold Coast City's future growth with that of its neighbours.

Questions for Consideration

- ***What planning models and zones can we use to accommodate the different lifestyle needs and preferences of Australians in cities?***

The answer is in variety and in building on the existing city's strengths. There is no single solution for an ideal sustainable city form. Obviously the emphasis should be on mixed use, concentrated development, rather than single use low density development areas.

- ***Are urban hubs and communities concentrated around public transit nodes an appropriate future model to suit Australian lifestyle needs?***

Yes. As noted above, more than 9% of Gold Coast City households do not have a car. It is wrong to assume that the traditional suburban pattern meets general community lifestyle needs. Note however that 'urban hubs' are not is not the only appropriate city model for the future.

- ***How do we transform existing suburban and inner city developments into more sustainable forms of community living?***

Redevelopment of existing urban areas is part of the natural development cycle of all cities. Progressive infill development activity is a healthy process that can achieve sustainability goals. However for major redevelopment, eg the re-use of old industrial precincts or reclaiming of waterfront precincts, special purpose development authorities should be established and resourced to develop integrated development plans that maximise opportunities for greater urban sustainability. These are often the landmark changes that signal great shifts in lifestyle patterns for individual cities.

- ***How do we ensure that further urban expansion occurs as planned community developments?***

All development at the fringe of existing urban areas must achieve a suitable level of master planning before it is approved. In particular the delivery of infrastructure, both [physical and social, needs to be managed so that it closely aligns with the needs of the new community to be housed in the proposed development.

- ***Are there dangers in developing decentralised cities with multiple urban hubs and how do we address these issues?***

No. The Gold Coast is already such a city and is known Australia wide for its lifestyle advantages. This sort of concern is based on old-fashioned thinking that the only real cities are the State Capitals with their grand CBDs. GCCC would argue that a multiple centre city is a much more sustainable urban form.

- ***What community, commercial and biodiversity needs should be addressed in developing new urban centres?***

As the focus of much of Australia's development activity, new communities on the urban fringe deserve a lot more attention as to how their diverse and emerging needs are being met. As new developments, these should exhibit best practice in urban living. We should be making these areas the best 'places' that they can be.

PART 5

Conclusion

The Gold Coast City Council is a strong supporter of greater Commonwealth involvement in the development of Australia's cities. This is the key challenge for Australia as a nation, and it is imperative that the Commonwealth plays its role in the building of our future through a national cities policy. This inquiry is an excellent start.

It is essential that the Commonwealth shows some leadership on the issues of current and future patterns of settlement, the sustainability issues associated with these settlement patterns, and how government policy might ensure that developed areas retain an Australian lifestyle without diminishing the future value of Australian ecosystems. These issues have been central considerations for the Gold Coast City Council for some time, and like many other cities, GCCC warmly welcomes the Federal Parliament's current interest.

Gold Coast City has made great progress in balancing rapid growth with conservation of the environment. The initiatives described in this submission are intended to alert the Commonwealth to the great efforts that are already underway to make cities more sustainable. It is hoped that the GCCC examples can be instructive on a local, regional and national level.

GCCC is a strong supporter of the benefits of local and regional cooperation. These partnerships are essential to success in working towards sustainable cities. The SEQ2021 project is an excellent vehicle for better urban planning and development for Australia's fastest growing region. While the Commonwealth Government has a nominal involvement, it would be desirable for this to become a much more active role for the Commonwealth. Indeed SEQROC could prove to be a model for effective integration of all three levels of government in the management of Australia's urban future.

To date, the GCCC believes that it has suffered from too little Government direction on urban development at the national level, and a lack of State and Federal Government funding attention. More specifically, GCCC has felt that its particular needs as Australia's sixth largest city have not been sufficiently recognised by the Commonwealth Government. This enquiry provides a welcome opportunity to address these concerns in the context of the sustainable development of the nation's cities.

GCCC encourages the Inquiry to address the adequate resourcing of programs and responsibilities for sustainable cities and to recommend direct financial support for Local Government in this context.

GCCC encourages the Inquiry to facilitate the development and implementation of appropriate intergovernmental relations, and to actively support regional planning projects and processes

GCCC encourages the Inquiry to facilitate assistance from the Commonwealth's ability to apply financial, revenue raising and taxation powers to promote action by individuals, communities and industries in support of more sustainable cities..

GCCC encourages the Inquiry to facilitate the development of a national Cities Policy. The Commonwealth's focus should clearly identify issues of national significance and should facilitate policy and program approaches at the levels of nation and state.

Gold Coast City would be happy to provide further information on the programs and projects mentioned in this submission. Council's representatives will be happy to further assist the Environment and Heritage Committee members with their Inquiry deliberations.