

14 May 2007

Local Government Reform Commission

PO Box 16325

City East Queensland 4002

Re. Review of Queensland Local Governments

Dear Sir/Madam,

I submit that while the amalgamation of Queensland Councils may have some bureaucratic appeal, it nevertheless diminishes one of the basic tenants of a democratic society by infringing on the principal of 'taxation without adequate representation'.

The right to choose representatives accountable to residents of a specific community rather than merely having a minority voice within a super council, is unacceptable to Noosa residents who have been responsible for creating one of this country's very special places.

Like many others, I chose Noosa as my home because of the quality of life it provides. As a small village community that cares about its very fragile environment, it stands out like a beacon when compared with the rest of Queensland that has sadly succumbed to rampant exploitation by avaricious developers encouraged by local councils.

Furthermore, whilst the Sunshine Coast in its entirety attracts tourists looking for differing experiences, we know the majority of the 1.7 million visitors who choose to visit Noosa each year, do so because of its natural beauty and lack of development. In that respect Noosa is one of the few beach side communities in the world that hasn't been decimated by thoughtless development with little or no concern for sustainability, and those precious things that mean so much to residents and tourists looking for a more natural holiday experience.

As we move further into the 21st century, Noosa will become increasingly rare, provided it is spared from the environmental vandalism afflicting most of the planet.

In addition to all of the above, Noosa has a wonderful history of sound economic management and has proven over time that it has the capability not only managing its own economy but investing for future needs. Water storage, leading edge sewage management, a community entertainment centre, swimming pools, and upgrading streetscapes are but a few of these forward investments. So it's not simply meeting the recurring costs of running the shire but investing in future infrastructure.

There is a simile from the business sector that could well apply to merging Noosa into a super council. I refer to the acquisition of Myer by Coles in the 80's. It was promoted as the best thing in the history of Australian retail as it would make the combined group one of the largest of its kind in the world with economies of scale that would mean real benefits for customers and share holders alike. We know what happened; Myer was submerged into Coles, and lost its identity and ultimately its way. None of the benefits ever accrued to customers and shareholders.

Amalgamation not only puts Noosa at risk but in doing so, could destroy one of Queensland's and Australia's greatest assets. As a wise man once said, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it".

Please don't do it.

Yours faithfully

R.G Ansett

OVERVIEW OF NOMINATION

This nomination is based on the area comprising the Noosa Shire, Queensland, Australia, and the adjacent coastal waters to 3 kilometres offshore. The total permanent population within the proposed Biosphere Reserve is approximately 50,000 people, with a seasonal population of up to 65,000.

The total area covered by this nomination is approximately 150,000 hectares of freshwater/tidal and terrestrial areas.

This nomination aims to capture many of the features of the Seville vision for Biosphere Reserves in the 21st century. In this context, the proposed Biosphere Reserve will:

- Contribute to the implementation of existing international agreements promoting conservation in Australia;
- Include a wide variety of environmental, biological, economic and cultural situations, incorporating largely undisturbed areas, and extending to include major towns and cities, and taking in coastal and marine environments;
- Strengthen the emerging regional, and thematic global components of the functioning World Network of Biosphere Reserves;
- Promote scientific research, monitoring, training and education;
- Contain an extensive and functional occurrence of all Biosphere Reserve zones that fully reflect the natural and human dimensions of the area;
- Operate on the basis of open, evolving and adaptive relationships with all sections of the community to promote management that is culturally creative and ecologically, economically and socially sustainable;
- Promote an awareness and understanding through information exchange mechanisms, community capacity and network building, collaborative partnerships, education programs of sustainability and responsible stewardship of the area's ecosystems, resources and values; and
- Promote a greater awareness and understanding of the history of the area, the traditional owners of the land and impacts of European settlement of the area and the recognition of rights and participation.

This nomination has wide community support. A major community involvement program has been undertaken in the area to increase public awareness about UNESCO Biosphere Reserves. A draft nomination was widely distributed for public comment before finalisation. The development of the submission has been facilitated by the local government through a voluntary committee with broad community representation.

The area of nomination is ideal for the creation of a Biosphere Reserve. For more than 40 years, it has been home to one of the earliest and consistently active networks of community conservation groups in Queensland. Numerous scientific studies of world standing have been undertaken in the area. The challenge is to build on this culture to provide the basis for achieving sustainable use of the area's natural and cultural resources.

Managing urban growth in a sustainable manner and developing a culture of responsible stewardship by all community members is one of the key drivers of this proposal. The local economy has a strong reliance on tourism and this in turn is dependant on the natural resource base and locational attributes of the area. There are productive agricultural lands, community services, light industry and managed forests reserves, located in the transition zone of the proposed Biosphere area.

Several international treaties for conservation apply specifically the nominated area including the *Japan–Australia Migratory Birds Agreement, JAMBA*, a migratory bird protection agreement with Japan, and a similar agreement made with China, the *China–Australian Migratory Birds Agreement, CAMBA*.

The majority of the core areas described in this nomination are all publicly owned lands and waters managed by either State or Local Government authorities for conservation under State legislation. There are two private freehold properties included in the core area. These properties have legislative conservation protection under State Legislation.

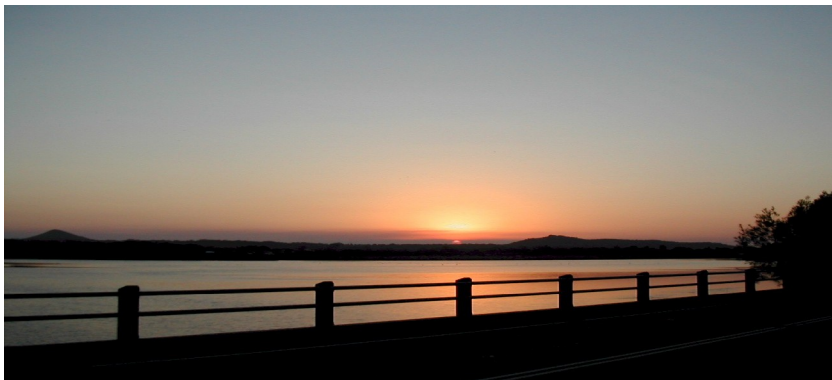
The buffer area includes both public reserves and private freehold lands that are managed to achieve integration of conservation and sustainable development outcomes. It includes all parts of the Nominated Areas lands that support remnant native vegetation. These lands are protected under the local government's land use planning scheme (the Noosa Plan) and the State Government's Vegetation Management Act (1999). These lands have been identified in the Noosa Plan's biodiversity overlay, which establishes regulatory protection mechanisms to minimise any adverse impacts on biodiversity values from development activities (including land clearing). It is envisaged that over time some properties will transition from the buffer area to the core area as property owners choose to adopt higher levels of conservation protection for their land.

The increasing emphasis by UNESCO on the transition zone is recognized in this nomination, since this is where the key issues on environment and development of a given region are to be addressed. The transition zone is by UNESCO definition not delimited in space, but rather is changing in size according to the problems that arise over time.

In this context, the environmental, biodiversity, natural history and cultural resources described in this nomination extend to the whole of the Noosa area because a holistic approach to landscape management is a central theme to the sustainability of the Noosa community. It is envisaged that over time some land will transition from the transitional area to either buffer or core through conservation oriented land acquisition programs and further uptake voluntary conservation programs.

The nominated area is shown on Maps 1-8 of this nomination.

All participation in Biosphere programs in Noosa will be voluntary, and the existing legal rights and responsibilities of property owners remain unchanged. Similarly, the jurisdictional independence of governments will continue to be respected and upheld.



Sunset over the
Lake Doonella
Noosaville

The administration of the Biosphere program is proposed to be through an incorporated non-statutory body established as an Incorporated Association. The organizational arrangements for the association are intended to provide for the involvement and participation of land managers of the core and buffer areas, together with public authorities and trusts who provide funding and / or other forms of support to assist in delivery of projects agreed to by the Association.

Local communities will be represented through democratically elected representatives and community based organizations. Individuals will also be eligible to seek membership of the Association.

The State Government of Queensland supports the Noosa Biosphere Reserve nomination to UNESCO as one means of encouraging ecologically sustainable development (ESD) through increased community involvement. The State Government has indicated that it sees this nomination as Phase 1 of the creation of a larger Biosphere Reserve in the region. The State has proposed that the Noosa Biosphere Reserve be extended in future to incorporate all of the Cooloola and Noosa National Parks and Mothar Mountain Forest Reserve. This submission recognises and supports the State Government's view on this matter. On this basis the establishment of a Biosphere Reserve at Noosa should be considered as the first step in a process by which a larger and more robust Biosphere Reserve may be developed in time.

The following organizations and individuals have provided letters supporting the establishment of the Noosa Biosphere Reserve:

- The Queensland Environmental Protection Agency;
- Noosa Residents and Rate Payers Association;
- Noosa and District Landcare Group;
- Noosa Integrated Catchment Association;
- Leightons Property Group;
- Paul Summers Planning Strategies;
- Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization ;
- Hon Greg Hunt Parliamentary Secretary for Minister Environment & Heritage; and
- Hon Glen Elmes Member for Noosa (State)

Copies of these letters are reproduced in Appendix 3.

In addition, an historic agreement was signed in December 2006 by parties committed to the establishment of a Biosphere Reserve over the Noosa local government area. A copy of this agreement is reproduced in Appendix 4. The agreement was signed by the following parties:

- Hon Greg Hunt (then the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment), and Hon Alex Somlyay (Member for Noosa) on behalf of the Commonwealth Government;
- Dr Michael Gloster (President of the Noosa Parks Association) on behalf of local conservation sector NGOs;
- Mr Tony Haslam (Secretary Noosa Biosphere Association) on behalf of the Biosphere Association; and
- Councillor Bob Abbot (Mayor of Noosa) on behalf of the Noosa Local Government.



River Boat on Noosa River at Sunrise



Noosa Council Media Release - 10/08/2007

Noosa Shire - International Biosphere Reserve one day, gone the next

It is truly ironic that about one month after Noosa Shire will be officially declared Queensland's first International Biosphere Reserve by the United Nations in February 2008, the Queensland Government is likely to declare Noosa Shire out of existence, as part of its Local Government reform process.

To put it another way : Noosa, which is about to achieve international recognition for its sustainable development agenda, is likely to become collateral damage in the State Government's bid to make local governments across Queensland more sustainable.

So what is a Biosphere Reserve and what part if any has the State Government had in putting forward Noosa's nomination as a Biosphere?

Put simply, a Biosphere reserve is an area of land and coastal/marine ecosystems (or a combination of these), which are internationally recognised within the framework of UNESCO's Program on Man and the Biosphere (MAB). Biosphere reserves are established to promote and demonstrate a balanced relationship between humans and their environment. Biosphere Reserves are designated by the International Coordinating Council of the MAB Program at the request of the State concerned and form an international network where communities voluntarily work to promote sustainable development.

To be successful in the establishment of a Biosphere reserve, you need an area with outstanding environmental values, coupled with a community of people who treasure their land. In Queensland it takes a different kind of community to do this, one where there is a strong partnership between the people and their local government to protect and defend their land and their values.

Over the past four decades, starting with the quiet advocacy of the legendary Dr Arthur Harrold who took on Russ Hinze, Minister for Everything, to prevent a road being bulldozed around Noosa National Park to Alexandra Bay and won, Noosa has been the battleground for a series of uncompromising and often bitter struggles from committed individuals, community organisations and Council itself in order to establish a unique sustainable development philosophy for the Shire.

It is these environmental values, coupled with such practical applications as a population cap, that are recognised as iconic by many commentators -- and in recognition of this fact, the Noosa Shire has recently been nominated by the Australian Government to the United Nations Economic, Scientific and Cultural Organisation to be internationally recognised as a Biosphere Reserve.

Noosa Shire's nomination as a Biosphere Reserve (and here it is important to note it is a nomination for the whole Shire) has been wholeheartedly supported by the Queensland Government through the Minister for the Environment. However, as D Day for amalgamation looms it appears increasingly likely that the Shire, which one Department lauds as being the best example of sustainable development in the State will be erased by another Department of the same Government, under the mantra of delivering strong sustainable government.

Is it Orwellian perversity, the ghost of big Russ, or just plain bureaucratic incompetence? It is up to the Premier to decide Noosa's fate.

For further information on Noosa's Biosphere nomination please contact Ben McMullen at Noosa Council on 5449 5290.

ENDS

- For further information, please contact : Ben McMullen tel : 5449 5290
or Publicity Officer Susie Osmaston
07 5449 5282; fax : 07 5447 1062; pbo@noosa.qld.gov.au; www.noosa.qld.gov.au

<. INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION PROGRAM – DELEGATION TO CANBERRA JUNE 2006 (BM)

Report by Manager Environmental Services

1 BACKGROUND

Noosa Council has passed a resolution to progress a number of programs seeking national and international recognition of the outstanding environmental, natural history, biodiversity and cultural values of Noosa Shire. Following on from this decision Council has established a working group consisting of members from Council's Sector Boards and other stakeholders within the Shire to assist in providing advice to Council about the appropriate strategies for seeking international recognition of the Shire's values under the identified programs. The identified programs include the National Heritage List, the World Heritage List, the Biodiversity HotSpots lists (national and international), the UNESCO International Biosphere Reserve Program and the International Convention on Wetlands (the Ramsar Convention).

The Working Group has met on one occasion and a report on its progress is provided in the Director Environment & Planning's report on Council Working Groups at this round of meetings. As indicated in that report another meeting of the Working Group is planned to take place on 3 August 2006. Meetings of the Working Group have been held in abeyance in anticipation of a planned trip by a delegation from Noosa Shire to visit public servants and Members of Parliament within the Australian Government, Canberra. After considerable organisation the delegates travelled to Canberra in June 2006.

2 NOOSA DELEGATION TO CANBERRA – JUNE 2006

The delegation to Canberra consisted of Bruce Davidson (CEO), Dr Michael Gloster (President Noosa Parks Association), Mr Stephen Poole (Consultant who has been working with both Noosa Council and Noosa Parks Association on related projects) and Ben McMullen (Manager Environmental Services). **Attachment 1** of this report provides an overview of the different meetings held in Canberra with relevant staff from the Australian Government and representatives from Parliament.

The key outcomes of the visit were that productive and promising relationships had been built with key staff within the Australian Government and comprehensive briefings have been provided to Greg Hunt (Parliamentary Secretary for Minister of Environment), and Wayne Grant (Senior Advisor to Minister Ian Campbell). Mr Alex Somlyay, local Federal Member for Noosa, ably assisted the delegation.

Key outcomes of the visit will be the organisation of a reciprocal delegation of some of the staff from the Australian Government to Noosa, to allow the Noosa representatives to provide first hand information within the Noosa context about all the relevant issues. In addition, work needs to be undertaken by Noosa stakeholders to provide further information, which will bolster and support the various submissions that have been made to the National Heritage Register by the Noosa Parks Association in relation of Noosa and Great Sandy National Parks lands and Ramsar listing of the Noosa River system. Additional information is also needed on Noosa's biodiversity values and the relationship between the Noosa National Park, Cooloola Section of the Great Sandy National Park and Fraser Island World Heritage areas.

Another key outcome from the meeting with Greg Hunt was his confirmation that it was his highest priority as Australia's representative to the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Program to progress a Noosa nomination for the Man and the Biosphere – International Biosphere Reserve Program. He also indicated that he would like to see Noosa begin work as soon as possible on a draft submission for the Biosphere Program.

The third key outcome from the meetings was recognition of the fact that there is a need for Noosa to engage more closely with the Queensland State Government to obtain their support for the various nominations Noosa is seeking to progress. Various staff from the Australian Government indicated their willingness to assist Noosa in its discussions with the State Government on these matters.

It is noted that en route to Canberra, Dr Gloster and Mr Poole met with key staff from a major non-government environmental organisation, who are working to develop a Biodiversity HotSpots International submission relating to some areas in the Australian Eastern Seaboard with outstanding biodiversity values. Following on from those discussions, Mr Poole and Dr Gloster conferred with Messrs Davidson and McMullen and it is recommended that Council undertake additional works to further develop the Biodiversity HotSpots National submission, which Mr Poole has already developed for Noosa Shire, to make it suitable for submission with the planned Humane Society submission to the Biodiversity HotSpots International Committee. The reason for this is that by putting in a local submission in the context of a larger submission Noosa's submission would have a higher likelihood of success. Obtaining Biodiversity HotSpot International recognition would assist in all other aspects of the international recognition program that Noosa has embarked upon.

RECOMMENDATION

Council note the report of the Manager of Environmental Services dated 14 July 2006 regarding International Recognition Program – Delegation to Canberra and resolve to:

- A. Endorse the further development of supporting information in partnership with Noosa Parks Association and the International Recognition Working Group to improve the existing submissions developed by Noosa Parks Association for National Heritage and Ramsar listings in Noosa;
- B. Further progress the development of a Biosphere Reserve International submission for Noosa with a target deadline of December 2006;
- C. Request the Manager Environmental Services to work further with the staff of the Australian Government to develop a reciprocal delegation visit from Canberra to Noosa to further discuss the various recognition programs within the Noosa context;
- D. Refer further discussion of these matters to the International Recognition Working Group to provide further advice to Council on any outstanding issues;
- E. Undertake further work (utilising the skills of Mr Stephen Poole) to develop a Noosa component of an International Biodiversity HotSpot submission, and seek the inclusion of the Noosa submission in the wider submission that is currently being developed; and
- F. Send a letter of thanks to both Greg Hunt, Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Environment and Hon Alex Somlyay, MP for providing assistance to Noosa Council with the recent delegation to Canberra.

(Index Project: International Recognition Working Group (MES))

Directorates/Sections Consulted:

<input type="checkbox"/> Business Building Certific.Group Child Care Centre Economic Strat. & Innov. Recreation Facilities Water & Sewerage	<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Services Financial Services Human Resources Information Services Legal Services Planning & Support Revenue Services	<input type="checkbox"/> Community Services Art Gallery Community Dev. Creative Noosa Environmental Health Library Public Order & Safety Recreational Services Respite Centre Youth Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environ & Planning Building Services Environmental Services Land Development Land Use Plumbing Services Strategic Planning
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Works

- Design
- Works Administration
- Works Operations
- Works Planning



Exec. & Secretariat

- Cultural Board
- Economic Board
- Environment Board
- Social Board
- Tourism Noosa

Attachment 1

**NOTES FROM VISIT OF NOOSA DELEGATION TO DEPARTMENT
ENVIRONMENT & HERITAGE AND AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT, CANBERRA**

Introduction

The following are notes from the meetings attended by a delegation from Noosa to Canberra, including Bruce Davidson (CEO), Dr Michael Gloster (on behalf of Noosa Parks Association) Steve Poole (consultant to Noosa Council and to Noosa Parks Association), and Ben McMullen (Manager Environmental Services).

The visit took place on Wednesday 14 June 2006. The delegation met with representatives from Australian Government and Department of Environment & Heritage and the Office of the Minister for the Environment and the Parliamentary Secretary, Environment.

The purpose of the visit was to discuss initiatives being progressed by Noosa Council in consultation and partnership with Noosa Parks Association and other Noosa stakeholder organisations in relation to obtaining increased recognition and protection of the outstanding environmental values of the Noosa Shire.

Meeting 1 – National Heritage & World Heritage Listing

Meeting 1 was held with Jennifer Carter and Terry Bailey from Department of Environment & Heritage – Heritage Division. Jennifer is the Director of Natural Heritage Assessment. Terry is the Assistant Secretary to the Heritage Assessment Branch.

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the submissions by the Noosa Parks Association with the Australian Government for consideration of listing of Noosa National Park (lodged), and Cooloola Section of the Great Sandy National Park (about to be lodged) on the National Heritage List. Also discussed was the submission currently being developed by the Noosa Parks Association for recognition of these areas within the World Heritage Area Estate as an extension of the current Fraser Island World Heritage Area.

Jennifer and Terry indicated that the submission provided by Noosa Parks Association in relation to nomination for inclusion of Noosa National Park on the National Heritage Register was amongst the most detailed submissions received by the Agency. Both Jennifer and Terry were impressed with the standard of the submission, however, the process for assessing the merits of the area against the various criteria outlined in the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, which considered indigenous, cultural and natural heritage values, was still underway at the time of the meeting. Jennifer and Terry were therefore not able to give specific advice as to whether or not the merit of the area would necessarily result in its inclusion on the register.

In relation to World Heritage Area listing, Jennifer and Terry advise that the most important next step for the Noosa delegation is to obtain the support of the Queensland State Government. They indicated that the process for the nomination of Cooloola as an extension to Fraser in association with other lands within the Great Sandy Straits was relatively well advanced and for Noosa National Park to be included in the submission, a detailed case would have to be developed as soon as possible, outlining the justification for this area's inclusion. NPA indicated that the case it is currently developing for the inclusion Noosa National Park seeks to address this. It is also very important that the State Government should also support the inclusion as the matter would not be likely to proceed very much further without State

Government support. It was again stressed that this is the priority action required by the Noosa delegation.

It was agreed that representatives from the Heritage Assessment Unit would be invited to visit Noosa for a field investigation of the sites proposed to be included in the two registers.

Meeting 2 - Ramsar Listing

The second meeting was held with Deb Callister, who is Acting Director of the Coasts and Water Branch, Bruce Grey and Gail Stewart, both staff from the Inland Waters Section of the Coasts & Water Branch.

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the submission lodged by the Noosa Parks Association for consideration of inclusion of the Noosa River and Lakes system in the register of Ramsar listed wetlands within Australia. Deb Callister indicated that there were currently five Ramsar proposals under some form of assessment and / or development with the Australian Government.

Deb indicated that following an international review of the criteria for listing of wetlands under the Ramsar convention, additional ecological character descriptions had been added in 2006 which now include non-bird and non-fish species. It is therefore important that the Noosa Parks Association submission give consideration to non-bird and non-fish species. It was noted that the evidence of species existence and relative abundance, and the relative importance of the populations of particular species within the proposed Ramsar listed area needs to relate to species which are listed as significant under the IUCN Red list and or JAMBA/CAMBA/Bonn and relate to total percentage of populations visiting Australia and in some cases the percentage of global populations. It is highly preferable that a scientific peer-reviewed paper, on these populations would back up any submission.

Deb also stressed the importance of the Noosa deputation obtaining strong State Government backing for Ramsar recognition and protection of the Noosa River and Lakes system.

Deb advised that it would be preferable for well advanced or adopted management arrangements to have been developed for the waterways / wetlands which are under nomination for Ramsar listing. Therefore, there is a need to review the status of the various adopted management strategies and mechanisms for Noosa to determine which of these might fulfil the needs for Ramsar listing. It may be that a combination of the arrangements could be documented in such a way that the management agencies would be satisfied with adopting them and they would fulfil the Ramsar requirements.

(After the meeting, members of the Noosa deputation agreed that given Deb's advice, there was merit in the Ramsar nomination becoming a joint Noosa council – NPA submission, in consultation with a wider group of stakeholders).

Again Deb said that she would be more than happy to visit or send a delegation to Noosa to inspect the nomination area.

Meeting 3 – Meeting with Parliamentary Secretary, Environment

The third meeting was held with Greg Hunt, the Parliamentary Secretary for the Minister for the Environment in relation to the proposal for the establishment of a Biosphere Reserve centred on Noosa Shire under the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Program.

Greg indicated that he has primary carriage for the implementation of the Man and the Biosphere, Biosphere Reserve Program in Australia. He is the Australian Government's representative on the International body which oversees the implementation of the program. Greg indicated that he had requested that departmental staff give priority to the Noosa Biosphere as their next biosphere proposal to be developed and submitted from Australia to the program. He also advised that the Mornington Peninsula had recently gone through the process of becoming recognised as a Biosphere reserve involving integrated human settlement areas and significant conservation areas. He suggested that the team talk to John Irwin in relation to the Barkindji Biosphere bid, which is well down the track towards formal lodgement of a submission.

Greg was very keen for the Noosa delegation to progress the submission on a Noosa Biosphere as soon as possible, indicating target time frames around August – September 2006. However, later meetings with departmental staff indicated that the time frame could probably be slightly longer and it would be preferable to have detailed final draft submission for a biosphere centred on Noosa Shire completed by December 2006 with the process enabling possible announcement for Noosa sometime in mid to late 2007.

Greg was highly supportive of the idea of a delegation of staff and relevant individuals from the Minister's office to come to Noosa to visit the areas in question during the course of this visit to see first hand their outstanding values.

Meeting 4 – National Biodiversity Hot Spots Program

A meeting was held with Ms Anne-Marie Watt Acting Director (National) Biodiversity HotSpots to discuss Australian Government's biodiversity Hot Spots acquisition program, and whether or not there is potential for Noosa Shire to become recognised as a biodiversity hotspot and therefore eligible to seek funding under the biodiversity hotspots acquisition program.

Anne-Marie indicated that as a result of recent discussions with the Office of the Prime Minister, an agreement had been made to review the performance of the national biodiversity Hot Spots acquisition program because insufficient of the funds allocated to the program had been utilised to deliver on-the-ground outcomes. The model that is currently being considered by departmental staff to assist with the implementation of the program was to develop a 'panel of providers' that would in turn call for Expressions of Interest from the general public or individuals and agencies to nominate themselves as being capable of bringing forward integrated proposals for the acquisition and management of land in strategic areas of Australia, based on biodiversity conservation outcomes.

Anne-Marie indicated that it was highly likely that most of the entities on the panel would be consortiums made up of individuals and / or organisations which would be able to demonstrate the wide range of skills and associations necessary to deliver the on-the-ground outcomes. It was canvassed that entities like the regional bodies established for the oversight of distribution and investment of funds under the National Heritage Trust Program MII may be suitable organisations to undertake this work.

Anne-Marie advised that it was quite likely that even a regional body would not have all of the skills, experience and associations necessary to be on the panel in its own standing, but may need to become part of a consortium to qualify. It was thought that the program would deliver two main components, being voluntary acquisition of land

with particular emphasis on partnership acquisitions and stewardship payments for on ground works.

Organisations such as Noosa Council would need to approach one of the panel members and develop a proposal with them that demonstrated the merit of acquisition of land in Noosa based on the priorities of the program, and then through that panel member, make application for the necessary funding.

It was stressed by departmental staff that this review had only recently been initiated and that at this point in time, nothing was particularly well documented in relation to what the requirements for gaining access to funding under the program might entail.

Meeting 5 – Biosphere Reserve

This meeting was held with Ms Helen Halliday Director - Parks Strategic Development Section, in relation to the biosphere reserve listing centred on Noosa Shire. Helen indicated that they felt that, based on briefings obtained through the Office of the Parliamentary Secretary, Mr Hunt, that Noosa had a good case to seek international biosphere reserve listing. They also indicated that the Barkindji Biosphere Reserve nomination would provide a good reference document, as would the Mornington Peninsular nomination. It was advised that Noosa should work towards developing a final draft nomination by the end of 2006 so that it can be submitted in early 2007 to the various rounds of meetings that it would need to go to under the UNESCO meeting program.

The key meeting for a decision on the biosphere would likely to be in July 2007. Departmental staff confirmed that the direction they had been given from the Office of the Parliamentary Secretary was for the Noosa Biosphere to be the next biosphere reserve nomination from the Australian Government. Departmental staff, while having limited resources, were more than willing to work with Noosa Council and the Noosa Parks Association and other stakeholders within the Noosa area to progress the development of the nomination.

Helen stressed the importance of the Noosa delegation obtaining strong State government backing for a Noosa Biosphere Reserve, as much of the core protected area of such a reserve is the property of the state.

The meeting with departmental staff on this matter was particularly productive. It was agreed that staff would accompany a delegation from Canberra to Noosa for the purpose of providing a briefing on the process for Noosa stakeholders and undertaking a field evaluation of the Noosa environment.

Meeting 6 – National Reserve System

The subject of this meeting was National Reserve System Acquisitions – Noosa Shire. The meeting was held with Gillian Lee, Assistant Director, National Reserve System, and Peter Taylor, Director of National Reserve System. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss Noosa Council's desire to submit an application for National Reserve System acquisition funding to assist with the acquisition of a high priority strategic blocks of land within Noosa Shire owned by the Riley family.

The strategically important land is located between Tewantin locality and the Cooroibah locality. It adjoins the Noosa River system and borders the foreshore of Lake Cooroibah. Gillian and Peter indicated that while they had intended to call for a round of funding under the National Reserve System in May 2006, that decision had been revised and no funding round would be called for mid 2006. However, they

would be willing to accept and consider an application from Noosa Council in relation to these properties.

An application had been developed by Noosa Council and was formally submitted and lodged with Gillian and Peter at the meeting. Peter and Gillian both provided positive feedback about the standard of the applications previously made by Noosa Council for funding under the acquisition program. They indicated that regardless of whether or not the National Reserve System was able to provide funding contribution towards the acquisition of the Riley property, Australian Government staff would be willing to assist Council in negotiations with the State Government about the possibility of obtaining acquisition funding from the State for these lands.

Once again, this was a very productive meeting and both Gillian and Peter agreed that it would be beneficial to have a field visit to Noosa to become more familiar with the Noosa context.

Meeting 7 – Briefing to Wayne Grant Senior Advisor to Minister Campbell

The final meeting was with Wayne Grant who is an advisor to Minister Ian Campbell, Minister for Environment & Heritage. Minister Campbell was unable to be present at the meeting as he had commitments in relation to the International Convention on Whaling.

The purpose of this meeting was to provide a key advisor from the Minister's Office with an overview of the range of different applications and initiatives that Noosa Council and/or, Noosa Parks Association, supported by a wide range of local community stakeholders, were trying to progress in the Noosa Shire area. It was hoped that Parliamentary staff within the Minister's Office would then be better able to assist in briefing the Minister when he considers the various matters raised at the meetings.

The meeting with Wayne was very productive and he indicated that he believes that the course that Noosa is taking in relation to the various applications was a sound one. He also indicated that he believed that there would be merit in arranging a field visit from a range of the stakeholders involved in the presentations today with himself and / or other representatives from the Minister's Office, or if possible, the Minister to Noosa in the near future.

Conclusion:

Generally speaking the conclusion from the day was that a great deal of good will was generated within the bureaucracy of the Australian Government's Environment agency in relation to the range of projects that the Noosa contingent had come to discuss. All of the people who were met by the delegation were keen to follow up the meeting with a trip to Noosa, whereby relevant issues could be further discussed within the local context. It was agreed that a high priority should be the development of the application for Noosa Biosphere under the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere program. Further work should also to be done by Noosa Council and Noosa Park Association in jointly building the case for the Ramsar nomination for the Noosa River system, together with a set of management arrangements in an advanced draft form, if not an adopted form, for the Noosa River system to support the Ramsar nomination.

In relating to the National Heritage Register and the World Heritage Register nominations, key outcomes were that the National Heritage applications were in good standing. An assessment of the nomination would now be undertaken and departmental staff will provide further briefing and information to Noosa stakeholders

about any information gaps that required to be addressed. In terms of World Heritage, the next move would be to develop State Government support for the notion of the addition of the Noosa National Park within the Cooloola World Heritage Area nomination. Australian Government officers would be willing to assist in those negotiations with Noosa based stakeholders.

In terms of conservation acquisitions, follow up meetings should be arranged as soon as possible to allow representatives from the Department to see the Riley lands in particular to assist them with the determination of their decision on this matter. Noosa should maintain a watching brief in relation to the National Biodiversity Hot Spots program as this was clearly in a process of review and the outcomes could have significant implications for Noosa in relation to acquisition of key parcels of land in the future.



Joint Media Release

between Noosa Council and Professor Kenneth Wiltshire, AO - former Chairman of the Australian National Commission for UNESCO.

WORLD RECOGNITION FOR ICONIC NOOSA COMMUNITY AND
TOURIST DESTINATION UNDER THREAT BY QUEENSLAND
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMALGAMATION.

Noosa is about to achieve international recognition as one of the world's greatest examples of sustainable development.

In late September, Noosa's nomination by the Australian Government to become a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve will be decided in Paris.

There are around 500 Biosphere Reserves in the world but very few in Australia and none in Queensland.

Becoming a Biosphere Reserve is recognition of the successful relationship between a community and its natural environment in a true partnership.

Noosa is a perfect example of a community with true community spirit with a model of governance that has true consultation, involvement and united visions that is a key requirement to become a Biosphere Reserve.

Being recognised as a Biosphere Reserve will give Noosa the international recognition that it deserves and will be one of the best examples in the world of how to achieve sustainable development that is the one of the main global issues in the world today.

The greatest growth areas in Tourism throughout the world today are in eco and cultural tourism. Being recognised as a Biosphere Reserve will make Noosa one of the world's greatest destinations for ecotourism that attracts tourists who value the environment and who wish to learn an experience.

HOWEVER, the latest attempts by the Queensland Government to amalgamate local governments are putting all of this at risk.

The actions of the Queensland Government are surprising, since that Government is a supporter of the nomination of Noosa as a Biosphere, along with the Commonwealth Government and of course the Noosa Shire Council.

To become a Biosphere Reserve, the community involved must be able to demonstrate its cohesion and commitment to living in harmony with the environment. The current Noosa Shire Council perfectly demonstrates this at the moment and indeed the boundaries of the Biosphere Reserve are exactly the boundaries of the Noosa Shire Council for this very reason. Any amalgamation would remove that sense of identity and create the possibility of development swamping the environmental values that Noosa currently enjoys.

It is also important that Noosa is the gateway to the World Heritage area of Fraser Island and in the near future it seems certain there will be one substantial ecotourism resource stretching throughout this region. This will be lost as well if the current amalgamation proposal is implemented.

Noosa is truly an iconic community and needs to stand alone to continue its international recognition as one of the world's greatest examples of a thriving community in harmony with nature.

Professor Kenneth Wiltshire, AO, is the former Chairman of the Australian National Commission for UNESCO and Australia's representative on the UNESCO Executive Board from 1999 - 2005. He was the inaugural Chairman of the World Heritage Wet Tropics Management Authority and is currently Professor of Public Administration at the University of Queensland Business School.