

Southern Cassowary Conservation Policy

Policy type	Council
Function	Development and Environmental Services
Policy Owner	Natural Environment and Sustainability
Effect date	26 October 2023

1. Objective

The objective of this policy is to develop and implement strategies that support the long-term viability of the Southern Cassowary population across the Cassowary Coast Region.

2. Background

The Southern Cassowary is listed as 'Endangered' under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cwth)* and as a *Matter of National Environmental Significance (MNES)*. The *Nature Conservation Act 1992 (Qld)* lists the Wet Tropics population, which encompasses the Cassowary Coast region, as 'Endangered' and as a *Matter of State Environmental Significance (MSES)*.

The Cassowary Coast region provides for a distinctive Wet Tropics population of the Southern Cassowary. As listed MNES and MSES, the Southern Cassowary must be taken into consideration by local governments in the decision making processes.

The main threats to cassowaries as outlined in the Cassowary Recovery Plan are as follows:

- Climate Change and its impacts on habitat loss including coastal inundation and storm events, fire regimes, and direct impacts of high temperatures, drought and movement of human populations.
- Habitat fragmentation: much of remaining habitat is fragmented, isolating groups and disrupting movement.
- Habitat degradation: through invasion of weeds such as pond apple, changed fire regimes and the impacts from feral pigs.
- Land manager inaction and lack of planning at scale
- Roads and traffic: cassowaries are killed by vehicles on roads.
- Interactions with humans and dogs: urban development brings more domestic dogs and more frequent interactions with humans ie feeding.
- Diseases: aspergillosis, avian tuberculosis and parasites.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all Council operations, projects, programs and processes.

4. Definitions

Cassowary Recovery Plan – means the current Recovery Plan for the southern cassowary, pursuant to the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cwth)* and the *Nature Conservation Act 1992 (Qld)*

Community projects – means projects initiated, managed and delivered by community groups benefitting from in-principle, in kind or financial support from Council.

Council managed projects – means those projects initiated, managed and delivered by Council.

Development – as defined in the *Planning Act 2016 (Qld)*.

Elected Member – means the Mayor and all Councillors.

Employee – means all employees of Council, whether employed on a permanent, temporary, or part-time basis and includes volunteers and employees of businesses and entities contracted to provide services to, or on behalf of Council.

5. Policy Statement

Council will work in partnership with the community, industry and the Federal and State Government to:

- Build community awareness of cassowary conservation efforts and initiatives.
- Manage the impact of development and Council managed projects on the cassowary population, in accordance with Council's legislative and regulatory obligations and responsibilities.
- Identify, establish and enhance cassowary habitat and wildlife corridors to support cassowary populations, movement and dispersal.
- Undertake and support conservation initiatives, including innovative research and community projects that enhance cassowary welfare and population viability.
- Invest in the management of Invasive plants and Animals impacting on habitat quality and cassowary survival.

6. Policy Implementation Guidelines

6.1 Community Awareness

- 6.1.1 Improved community engagement and education on cassowary behaviour and habitat requirements across all private and commercial sectors.
- 6.1.2 Maintain cassowary conscience branding and marketing/media campaign across all available platforms and through dedicated website page to improve community understanding and knowledge of the species.
- 6.1.3 Develop and maintain interpretive and advisory signage for educational road safety purposes.
- 6.1.4 Promote the Cassowary Coast region and localities with known southern cassowary populations as Cassowary Conservation Areas (e.g. Etty Bay, Mission Beach.)



6.2 Development and Planning

- 6.2.1 Promote and take actions to address the key threats as identified in Cassowary Recovery Plan (climate change, habitat loss and threats from roads and domestic dogs).
- 6.2.2 Develop a Cassowary Coast Cassowary local area management plan to guide future potential investment, land buyback or land swap opportunities.
- 6.2.3 Effectively link this policy with other existing and future policies plans and procedures.
- 6.2.4 Adopt key actions and objectives from existing technical documents such as Department of Transport and Main Roads Cassowary Conservation Management Plan and Wet Tropics Management Authority Management Guidelines as they relate to improved Cassowary Management across the CCRC road network.
- 6.2.5 Consider the best outcomes for cassowaries in all road management, local laws, planning schemes and development decisions.
- 6.2.6 Develop guidelines for property owners to inform best practices that deal with the interference of cassowary movement, address restrictions of corridor function and maintenance and barriers (such as certain fencing) that should not be installed.

6.3 Habitat Enhancement

- 6.3.1 Align operational and grant funding opportunities to address key threatening processes of climate change, habitat degradation and loss, invasive plants and animals negatively effecting cassowary populations.
- 6.3.2 Implement best practice road design and vegetation management principles as identified by science and state and commonwealth road management principles across cassowary coast road network.
- 6.3.3 Improve the regions fire management in light of climate change and protecting rainforest areas through improved edge management and risk reduction.
- 6.3.4 Develop targeted rehabilitation programs at identified road crossing points and restore available council land to increase available cassowary habitat.
- 6.3.5 Engage First Nations People in the on-ground management and restoration of key cassowary habitat areas under council control.

6.4 Conservation initiatives

- 6.4.1 Implement a targeted grants program to restore cassowary habitat and corridors funded partly from the environment levy.
- 6.4.2 Develop land use incentives to retain, enhance and protect cassowary habitat on private land and undertake active promotion of cassowary and carbon credits initiatives for alternate land use.
- 6.4.3 Promote nature based and market based mechanisms to support habitat retention and enhancement on private property.
- 6.4.4 Promote and provide cassowary food trees for landholders located in identified cassowary habitat.
- 6.4.5 Partner with and fund further research to improve knowledge on sensitive road design and early alert systems to reduce road fatalities.
- 6.4.6 Partner with and fund further research into habitat utilisation and other factors effecting long term species viability.

6.5 Invasive Species Management

- 6.5.1 Effectively coordinate and manage feral pigs at a landscape scale to reduce their impacts on cassowary survival and habitat.
- 6.5.2 Undertake targeted weed control to improve connectivity, accessibility and condition of cassowary habitat.

7. Stakeholders

- The community of the Cassowary Coast Region
- First Nations people of the Cassowary Coast
- Cassowary Recovery Team
- Cassowary Advocacy Groups
- Key government agencies including the Wet Tropics Management Authority, Department of Transport and Main Roads, and the Department of Environment and Science.
- Local government partners including the Hinchinbrook Shire Council, Cairns Regional Council, Tablelands Regional Council, Douglas Shire Council and Cook Shire Council
- Queensland and Australian government elected representatives.

Related forms, policies and procedures	CCRC Corporate Plan 2021 - 2025 CCRC Operational Plan 2023 - 2024 CCRC Planning Scheme Local Laws Sustainability Policy
Relevant legislation	<i>Local Government Act 2009 (Qld)</i> <i>Nature Conservation Act 1992 (Qld)</i> <i>Planning Act 2016 (Qld)</i> <i>Vegetation Management Act 1999 (Qld)</i> <i>Biosecurity Act 2014 (Qld)</i> <i>EPBC act 1999 (Cwth)</i>
Reference and resources	Draft National Recovery Plan for the Southern Cassowary (<i>Casuarius casuarius johnsonii</i>) EPBC Act Significant Impact Guidelines Wet Tropics Guidelines and Code of Practice DTMR Cassowary Conservation Management Plan

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