



Sunshine Coast Biosphere

Frequently asked questions

What is a biosphere?

A biosphere is an international site of excellence, recognised by UNESCO as an area of natural beauty where people live and work. Biospheres are places, just like our region, where active conservation sits alongside responsible development and people living sustainably.

Australia has five biospheres, and across the world there are more than 720 UNESCO Biospheres in over 130 countries. [Learn more about the UNESCO biosphere program on the UNESCO website](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/environment/ecological-sciences/man-and-biosphere-programme) <www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/environment/ecological-sciences/man-and-biosphere-programme>.

Why be a biosphere?

Across our region, people are committed to finding the 'sweet spot' where sustainable development and active conservation are aligned. A biosphere credential aligns to our values and assets and enables us to continue as we are with a focus on making sustainable, future-focused change.

A UNESCO biosphere designation recognises that each of us can contribute to a sustainable region as we live, work and play on the Sunshine Coast and maintain our commitment to remain future focused.

International recognition through the UNESCO Biosphere program brings opportunities to the Sunshine Coast. It provides a competitive advantage to facilitate sustainable growth along with a range of benefits to our natural environment, our lifestyle and economy. Our region has the potential to become a magnet for others from around the world who want to buy from and visit a region that focuses on sustainability.

What does this mean for residents and businesses?

A biosphere reserve is non-statutory. This means that as long as people are following local, state or federal laws then nothing needs to change. People can continue to operate their

business or enjoy the outdoors as they currently are, although continuing to adopt sustainable practices will be encouraged.

There are many benefits associated with being a biosphere that Sunshine Coast residents can take advantage of. A biosphere credential, coupled with harnessing these benefits, will ensure our region adapts to change, while maintaining our special natural areas and our unique lifestyle.

What activities occur in the biosphere areas?

The biosphere status is not intended to place restrictions upon business or industry. Rather, it is a recognition that our residents live, work and play within our beautiful natural environment. It will also allow residents and businesses to take advantage of the benefits and opportunities associated with a UNESCO Biosphere credential.

Is the Sunshine Coast a stand-alone biosphere?

Yes, in a geographic context, the Sunshine Coast biosphere captures the whole Sunshine Coast local government area.

However, the UNESCO Biosphere program encourages and offers the opportunity to collaborate with, learn from and share knowledge with the Australian and global network of biospheres. Taking advantage of these opportunities and working together with other biospheres will help us protect and enhance our liveability, environment and economy for future generations.

What does our Sunshine Coast Biosphere look like?

Our biosphere has areas that are clear, simple and easy to understand. The areas apply to the land in the local government area and the sea out to three nautical miles. They align with Council's existing Planning Scheme, state and federal planning policy and legislation. This ensures consistency and allows businesses, land and sea users to carry on, without change.

Live and Work Area

- Multiple land-uses where people live and make a living.
- Sustainable development and resource management practices are promoted and developed.
- Green spaces, parks, waterways and beaches are key natural assets.

Manage and Care Area

- Rural lifestyle and living areas where primary producers use the land for business.
- Care is taken to manage land and sea activities, minimise impacts on Protect and Enhance Areas and to connect Protect and Enhance Areas with Live and Work Areas.
- Manage and Care Areas must surround Protect and Enhance Areas but can stand alone.

- The width of the Manage and Care area must be at least 500 metres whenever possible to buffer the Protect and Enhance Areas. The 500 metre buffer width sits inside the Protect and Enhance Area (where there is a Live and Work Area immediately adjacent).

Special Manage and Care Area

- These areas are highly valued, small protected areas that are surrounded by Live and Work Areas.
- These areas will continue to be legally protected areas and managed accordingly.

Protect and Enhance Area

- A legally protected area that is publicly owned and devoted to long-term conservation.
- It is of sufficient size (over 20 hectares) to meet conservation objectives.
- Examples: larger national parks, part of some marine parks and Council's environment reserves.

If a biosphere is non statutory and nothing changes, then why did we become a biosphere and what is the value?

Sunshine Coast Council has a clear vision for what we're hoping to achieve for our region. A UNESCO Biosphere credential will support us to protect and enhance our environment, culture, lifestyle and economy for future generations. It aligns with our vision to be Australia's most sustainable region – Healthy. Smart. Creative.

We sought a UNESCO biosphere designation to leverage the benefits and opportunities that come with international recognition from a well-known and credible program, such as UNESCO's biosphere program.

Refer to the list of benefits and opportunities below.

What are the benefits and opportunities?

Benefits and opportunities include:

- Assisting to recognise and preserve our outstanding natural assets for current and future generations.
- Further enhancing the national and international reputation of the Sunshine Coast and being able to leverage the benefits and opportunities that come with international recognition.
- Helping to leverage economic opportunities including providing a significant point of difference for our agriculture, forestry, fisheries and tourism sectors.

A Sunshine Coast biosphere performance measurement framework will help us track progress towards sustainability and may assist to further develop the benefits and opportunities that a biosphere will bring to the region.

How is our biosphere different from other biospheres?

There are more than 720 biospheres around the world, and the Sunshine Coast is one of five in Australia. Each region that applies for biosphere status develops a nomination that is consistent with UNESCO's biosphere program purpose and principles. Their nomination must reflect the values, credentials, challenges and outcomes specific to each individual region. No two biospheres are the same. In line with this, our biosphere nomination for the Sunshine Coast local government area was fit-for-purpose for our community, culture, natural assets and economy.

Were the community involved in developing the nomination?

We adapted some of the world's best practice models to suit the Sunshine Coast context and set up a reference group with community membership to provide advice for the region's biosphere nomination. The reference group's focus was on social, cultural, economic and environmental values and assets. Members were leaders of the environment, aquatic environment, youth, social, tourism, agricultural, construction and property development sectors.

Will the community be involved in implementing our biosphere?

Yes, a Community Advisory Group will provide advice guiding the implementation of our Sunshine Coast Biosphere. Similar to the nomination and planning phase Community Reference Group (CRG), this group will have a balanced representation of a range of interests and industry sectors.

The community will also be kept updated on the progress of the biosphere implementation through our communication channels.

Will our biosphere designation limit development / growth on the coast?

A biosphere designation is non-statutory and does not over-ride existing planning policy and legislation at any level of government. However, our biosphere designation could assist to ensure that development and growth occurs in a responsible and sustainable way in line with the intent of UNESCO's Biosphere program, that responsible and sustainable development sits along-side conservation.

Does the proposed biosphere override the Planning Scheme?

No, a biosphere does not over-ride the Sunshine Coast Council Planning Scheme 2014.

There is no need for Council to amend our biosphere areas as land use changes. Council will keep track of how our areas change and report it to UNESCO at our 10-year review.

What is the Sunshine Coast Biosphere governance model?

The implementation governance model for the operation and management of the Sunshine Coast biosphere is fit-for-purpose for our people, our natural assets, our economy and our region. This follows on from the governance model that guided the development of the biosphere nomination and planning phases, where Council continues to lead the implementation, in partnership with the community and other key stakeholders. The governance

framework guiding the biosphere implementation phase is underpinned by the Sunshine Coast Biosphere governance principles, which were developed in consultation with the CRG during the nomination phase.

What is Council's role?

Strong leadership and support from government is a critical success factor in the world's best practice models for the governance of biospheres.

Council took a leadership role by developing a biosphere nomination, on behalf of the community, and sponsored the submission of the nomination to the Queensland and Australian Governments. The Australian Government submitted the nomination to UNESCO on behalf of the Sunshine Coast.

Council is now leading the implementation of the biosphere in partnership with the community.

What opportunities does the community have to get on board and be part of the biosphere?

The implementation of a biosphere isn't solely a Council project – this is a partnership between the Council and our community. The community is already part of the biosphere by way of living, learning, working and playing sustainably in their everyday lives, and can get on board through many existing programs and activities that contribute to the Sunshine Coast Biosphere objectives.

We encourage the community to take ownership of the biosphere designation, contribute to achieving the future vision of the Sunshine Coast Biosphere and join Council in working towards that.