



## Engaging our community

The Sunshine Coast community and key stakeholders were consulted about the proposal to develop a biosphere nomination for the Sunshine Coast for a period of 14 weeks between March and June 2019. Engagement with key stakeholder groups continued through to October 2019 when the nomination was endorsed by Sunshine Coast Regional Council, and remained ongoing through the planning phase of the project, leading up to the Sunshine Coast Biosphere designation in June 2022. Opportunities for community engagement in the implementation of the Sunshine Coast Biosphere will be ongoing.

### *Engagement for nomination development*

During the 2019 consultation period the Sunshine Coast community and key stakeholders were asked:

1. Do you support Sunshine Coast Regional Council leading a UNESCO Biosphere nomination on behalf of community?
2. Is the UNESCO Biosphere program a good fit for the Sunshine Coast Regional Council area?
3. Does the draft biosphere map need adjusting and if so, why and how?
4. Do the draft governance principles need adjusting and if so, why and how?
5. What are the benefits, opportunities, challenges or risks (perceived or real) associated with achieving a UNESCO Biosphere credential?

A wide range of consultation tools and activities were used to seek answers to these questions and to understand the community's thoughts on the proposed biosphere nomination. This included workshops, presentations, displays at events and expos, meetings, websites, social media, newspapers, television and other media.

In summary, there were:

- 89 engagement activities;
- 3,045 people connected face-to-face in conversations with staff and Councillors;
- 12 submissions received;
- 609 surveys submitted; and
- 83% of survey responses supportive of the proposed nomination.

Groups engaged about the biosphere nomination included:

- Traditional Owners;
- Residents;
- Tourism sector;

- Food and agriculture sector;
- Environment sector;
- Development sector;
- Young people;
- Small business;
- University and research sector; and
- Local, State and Commonwealth government.

Feedback collected from the consultation process was gathered and analysed. The proposed nomination was well received by the community, business and government as an opportunity to protect and enhance liveability, natural assets, culture the local economy and the community across the region.

A Community Reference Group (CRG), with an independent chair and representatives of the Sunshine Coast community, environment and economy, was formed to provide further advice for the development of the nomination, as well as inform planning and preparation for the implementation phase of the biosphere project. Engagement with Traditional Owners, the Kabi Kabi and Jinibara peoples, informed the development of the nomination and remains ongoing.

Following Sunshine Coast Council's endorsement of the Biosphere nomination on 24 October 2019, the Queensland and Australian Governments reviewed the nomination. The Australian Government subsequently endorsed the nomination and submitted it to the UNESCO Man in the Biosphere Programme (UNESCO MAB) in September 2021.

### *Engagement for planning to become a biosphere reserve*

In parallel to the biosphere nomination assessment process, Council continued to work with key stakeholders and the Biosphere CRG in preparation for implementation. During this phase of the project, frameworks for managing a Sunshine Coast Biosphere, including governance and performance measurement were prepared. In addition, a unique Sunshine Coast Biosphere brand was developed and refined with input from the CRG.

Engagement has continued with the Australian and Queensland Governments, and will remain ongoing through the governance of the Sunshine Coast biosphere during the implementation phase.

### *Future engagement opportunities*

Following the designation of the Sunshine Coast Biosphere in June 2022, Council will continue to engage with the community during the implementation phase. This includes involving the community in the implementation of governance arrangements for the management of the Sunshine Coast Biosphere (via a Community Advisory Group), consulting key stakeholders on opportunities to align with the Sunshine Coast Biosphere brand, as well as joining with the community to celebrate people and nature through the biosphere's implementation.