

Queensland National Park Investment Prioritisation Framework

Queensland's Protected Area Strategy 2020–2030 aims to **sustainably grow national parks** to achieve:

'... an expanded Queensland protected area system that safeguards biodiversity and cultural values, protects threatened species, and builds climate change resilience while creating economic benefits.'



Growing the Queensland national park estate will require significant ongoing investment, and will be achieved through well-founded decisions about acquiring, transferring and reserving new land.

This framework guides and shapes these decisions by providing a consistent, transparent and evidence-based methodology for identifying, assessing, selecting and prioritising potential acquisitions or transfers of new areas.

THE OBJECTIVES of this framework are to ensure that the Queensland national park estate:

- is comprehensive, adequate and representative of the state's biodiversity
- helps to conserve critical habitat for threatened and at risk species
- protects and conserves Queensland's First Nations people's culturally important landscapes and places and connection to Country
- protects non-Indigenous cultural heritage and historic places
- contributes to potential economic, social and health benefits to our community
- provides for high-quality, nature-based recreation and eco-tourism opportunities that connect people with nature
- contributes to carbon sequestration, climate resilience and protection of the Great Barrier Reef.

7 PRINCIPLES guide investment decisions:

- 1 Decisions about expanding the protected area estate are founded on contemporary evidence-based criteria and leading-edge science.
- 2 First Nations' knowledge and cultural objectives are accounted for in determining the cultural significance of the land being considered.
- 3 Local, regional and operational estate considerations are taken into account.
- 4 Potential economic, social and health benefits including community priorities, inform investment considerations.
- 5 Investment into new acquisitions represents and optimises value for money.
- 6 Decisions are transparent, accountable and consistent in accordance with this Framework.
- 7 Queensland's obligations under various legislative and international commitments are being fulfilled.

The CAR reserve system principles

Queensland's national parks contribute to Australia's National Reserve System, which is underpinned by a scientific framework to ensure Australia progressively extends protection to examples of all the nation's ecosystems. The objective of this scientific framework is to develop a 'comprehensive, adequate and representative' (CAR) system of protected areas.

COMPREHENSIVE: conserve samples of each element of biodiversity (represented by species and ecosystems) in the protected area system.

ADEQUATE: how much of each ecosystem or habitat should be sampled to provide ecological viability and integrity of populations, species and communities.

REPRESENTATIVE: gives more depth to the measure of comprehensiveness—a representative protected area system will sample the full range of biological variation within each ecosystem by sampling the range of environmental variation typical of the ecosystem's geographic range.

Assessment criteria and considerations that inform acquisition priorities:

Biodiversity conservation

- Contributes most to the CAR reserve system principles:
 - prioritises **Ecosystem Contribution**—ecosystems or species habitats that are not represented or not adequately represented in the protected area system
 - prioritises **Ecosystem Irreplaceability**—the conservation of that ecosystem or species could not be achieved elsewhere or is less likely to be achieved elsewhere in the landscape
 - prioritises **Ecosystem Urgency**—ecosystems, habitats or species under threat of loss or degradation through competing land uses
- Enhances climate change resilience and ecosystem adaptation capabilities of the protected area estate
- Improves landscape or habitat connectivity or enhances the ecosystem health of protected areas
- Consolidates high biodiversity value areas, e.g. intact high-value bushland in a highly fragmented landscape near or adjacent to existing national parks or other protected areas; a large tract of an at-risk regional ecosystem associated with a threatened species; or an area identified as an appropriate environment offsets site.

Indigenous cultural values

- Represents area of likely Indigenous cultural significance
- Provides or enriches social, cultural and economic benefits and connection for the First Nations custodians
- Advances Native Title outcomes such as consent determinations or supports Indigenous Land Use Agreements
- Supports increased opportunities for co-stewardship arrangements with First Nations custodians.

Strategic commitments and partnerships

- Fulfils government commitments, interstate or national agreements
- Facilitates co-investment conservation partnerships between government and non-government, conservation and philanthropic organisations, and other investors with an interest in conservation
- Facilitates co-investment cultural conservation partnerships between First Nations peoples, and government and non-government, conservation and philanthropic organisations.

Regional and operational considerations

- Feasible according to the cost analysis of the operational setup and ongoing management
- Consolidates boundary configurations
- Secures landscapes and places of special regional significance.

Social and economic values

- Provides direct or indirect benefits to the Queensland economy
- Presents opportunities for environmental research, citizen science and education
- Offers potential for nature-based recreation and ecotourism activities
- Provides potential economic opportunity for First Nations peoples to manage businesses autonomously and connect to Country
- Protects non-Indigenous cultural heritage and places of historical significance.

Due diligence and financial considerations

- A confirmed willing and legal vendor
- May be purchased in accordance with the overall acquisitions budget
- Satisfies due diligence checks regarding other State interests and impediments
- Provides opportunities for management costs to be offset by revenue generated through the natural capital market
- Provides opportunities to realise cultural, social and economic co-benefits from participating in the natural capital market.

Overall assessment and value proposition

- Overall value proposition of the proposed area is determined based on assessment of the values analysis, combined with the financial analysis and due diligence completed on a property.
- Following an overall assessment that accounts for the above considerations, each property is given an overall priority ranking of High, Medium or Low. The highest ranked properties will be prioritised for acquisition or transfer to the protected area estate.