

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

Due February 28th, 2025

Dear committee:

Thank you for conducting this inquiry. Volunteer organisations are critical to Australian society and many of them provide services that the government does not. It is important that organisations be supported in ways that allow them to continue their work which contributes to the well-being of society, no matter what the individual mission might be for a group.

About me:

Now in my late 60's, I started volunteering for NFP's when I was 15 but, even before then, I used to volunteer for my church from the age of 11. When I became an adult, I continued to volunteer while holding down full time jobs. I have volunteered in five states in two countries in the areas of animal welfare, animal rights, rainforest protection, aviculture, the ACF, and bat conservation. In 1994, I narrowed my focus primarily to amphibian conservation. In 1998, I founded the world's first dedicated frog "hospital" and have documented previously unknown threats to frog populations in QLD. I and the organisation I created have been awarded a half dozen times for this work and I still run this organisation from home despite many serious health problems of my own (having a setup based on a live-in volunteer for our work is essential and made necessary by the sheer lack of reliable, regular volunteers). I am just about to embark on a scientific project with a researcher at UQ to study what is causing cancer in Queensland frogs - again, as a volunteer.



I will not be addressing all of the ToR but those on which I can offer comment are listed below.

ToR 1. The current state of volunteering in Queensland and the value it contributes, including benefits to volunteers, organisations, communities and the State;

Statistics provided by volunteering recruitment groups always sound pretty rosy but I have always found in running this group over the past 26 years that volunteers are sparse. They generally don't want to do the manual tasks that are absolutely essential to our work; aren't actually committed to the work we do; and sometimes don't even respect other people's time and workload when they simply don't show up and don't call to say they are not coming. I wish I had a dollar for everytime I've been left in the lurch having to do the essential task the volunteer was going to do plus whatever was already on my plate.

This situation got exponentially worse after the lockdowns in 2020. Our group even tried providing gift cards or cash to volunteers (even though we couldn't afford it) to encourage them to participate and even that wasn't

enough to attract them. I was hearing reports from other organisations that, as well as a drop in memberships, their volunteer numbers plummeted. One organisation in Mission Beach which provided social services and had money in the bank was forced to fold because none of their members wanted to sit on the committee. Even small businesses I knew were lamenting that they were having trouble getting paid staff because suddenly nobody wanted to work.

The collateral damage from the lockdowns and severe inhumane impositions on society took a huge toll on people's willingness to participate in activities (whether they were paid or not). An example was when we put out a call for volunteers a couple years ago, we got about 35 responses - ALL from people in Brisbane and Sydney who wanted to "volunteer from home"! I wonder how they are supposed to help with tank washing, grounds upkeep and cleaning premises from elsewhere in the country. This is the new mentality that has infiltrated the Australian consciousness.

I'm afraid you will need the help of psychiatrists to figure out how to revive the concept of participation and sharing one's time with charitable causes. People's very thought processes have changed and too many don't seem to see volunteering as worthwhile anymore ... unless they can 'do it from home'.



What this does to organisations - including many I know locally plus my own group - is that the people who are carrying the workload are getting more and more buried under it. They are expected to keep their groups going by covering outrageous amounts of work and then they have the governance and paperwork duties above and beyond the objectives/goals of their particular group.

--> **Suggestion:** It might be very helpful if companies with more than 25 employees allowed each of them to do one paid day per month (or even per quarter) where that employee 'works' for a local volunteer group. They are still covered by their normal salary but spend that day assisting a community group.

--> **Suggestion:** This same idea above should apply to government departments as well. This might actually be quite an enlightening experience where public servants get to 'walk a mile in my shoes' so to speak - to see what NFP's actually have to contend with in the real world.

ToR 2. The views of volunteers, prospective volunteers and the volunteering sector on the current barriers to volunteering, including excessive legislative and regulatory burdens and other restrictions adversely limiting active volunteers;

We are located in regional Queensland at least one hour's drive from Cairns and the first barrier our few volunteers face is petrol costs and the time wasted to get here and back home. The ones who have any time to volunteer are those who are retired or unemployed and neither of them can afford to pay for petrol costs. (Retired people can also be plagued with more health problems and thus are not so reliable - they often call in sick.) We are not 'flash with cash' either to reimburse their costs since we cannot get any 'official' financial support for our essential expenses and must rely entirely on donations just to keep our doors open.



Those who are working are often saddled with mortgages and rents that I would classify as vicious so they no longer have time to volunteer and must use their 'spare time' to earn more money to cover their bills. The same applies to the increasing number of homeless people who are struggling just to survive. Thus the biggest barrier to our potential volunteers is that they can no longer afford to volunteer because of the cost of living, unchecked housing costs, and the petrol required to cover distances.

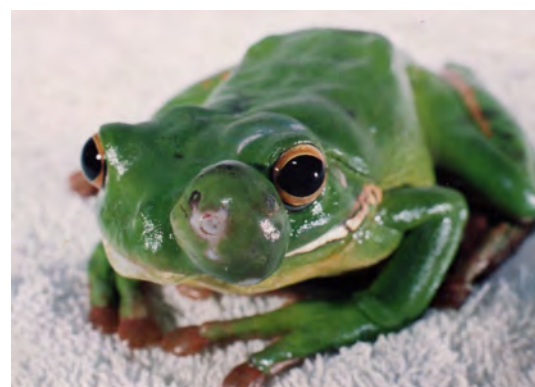
I note that the Commonwealth has been giving out grants to cover petrol costs but this is only for those who are required to use their vehicles for the volunteering task such as Meals on Wheels.

--> **Suggestion:** If a person on Centrelink assistance is volunteering, why can't they document their travel and petrol costs and receive a supplemental payment to mostly cover their petrol and vehicle wear and tear? How would this work? Let's say the volunteer lives 20km from the group they volunteer for. The group would have to keep a log of that volunteer's attendance and it might even be linked to a minimum amount of time volunteered (say, minimum two or three hours at a time). The group needs to confirm the attendance and then the volunteer could present their totals to Centrelink who would base a supplement payment of X amount per kilometre traveled. Here is a sample calculation: 2 days a week x 40km per day = 80 kms x \$.50 / km = \$40. (50 cents might not be the right amount but this gives you an idea). If this needs to be confined to the State, then perhaps a special pool of money can be set aside and those on Centrelink benefits can contact the State instead to apply for a reimbursement.

ToR 3. The current experiences, motivations and challenges for volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations and their recommendations for addressing challenges and improving the volunteering experience;

1) We are wildlife rehabilitators and if you want to seriously look at what is going on with wildlife rehab, that is an entirely huge side discussion. All wildlife belongs to the Crown but the Crown doesn't pay for its care and the State gives us rules to follow which may or may NOT be conservation-oriented. When such rules are not conservation oriented, this puts the wildlife carer in difficult and frustrating situations which conflict with their motivations to help and could eventually drive them out of helping wildlife.

2) While the State will pay for some equipment for carers, it does not support group's like ours to cover critical expenses involved to keep our services running (although it does support the rspca, Australia Zoo's hospital, and I believe Currumbin). Why are the rest of us left out? We have to pay rent and all the other infrastructure expenses those other facilities do (except salaries). We must raise all our ongoings from the public who doesn't have much disposable income to share with charities anymore - thanks to the housing crisis and inflation.



3) There are not enough veterinarians as it is and very few of those will assist wildlife and even less of that subset who know anything about *amphibian* wildlife. (That is why I get calls from vets asking ME to diagnose their animals and recommend treatments.) And when we do bring in animals to a responsive vet, we usually have to pay for their services. It's not our property and we're already donating our time and facilities to care for it. But the department insists that every animal that comes into care needs to be seen by a vet however they are not paying those vet bills. The poor abused carer is paying unless they are a member of a large, well funded group who reimburses them. (That is another aspect to check since I have heard comments that some wildlife rescue groups are sitting on money in the bank and not reimbursing vet bills for their members.)

My group receives about 140 animals a year, the overwhelming majority of which a vet would not have a clue what is wrong with it. Even with discounts, our group went through \$1,000 in Nov/Dec just to have procedures

done to four frogs - we can't afford that. The bottom line is why should I pay a vet to look at an animal they know nothing about when I can actually diagnose it myself far more accurately? I have tried explaining this to DES but they are not listening.

4) With the financial and time demands imposed on carers of wildlife, it takes a very driven, highly motivated person to get involved with wildlife care. Thus, there aren't enough carers to handle the volume of what is coming in. So those that do attempt rehab get overwhelmed with animals and burned out fast, forcing them to stop - or they run out of money to finance their caring activities and stop because of that.

5) Where is the training for vets interested in native animals and the potential carers who want to learn to work with a particular animal type? Those who engage in wildlife rehab need to be far more educated than those who deal with exotic dogs/cats. There may not be a vet available locally who knows about that native animal - thus the carer needs to have significant knowledge to make up for the lack of veterinary guidance. It is certainly that way for amphibians and I have tried to explain this to the department who simply isn't listening.



I have developed a comprehensive training course for those who want to get into frog rescue/rehab but the attendee needs to travel to our facility to get the training. Those who are interested can't afford the travel costs/hotel and a couple who have tried frog rehab have given up as it is "too hard". (Frogs are being affected by a wide range of invasive and previously undocumented problems including cancer - rehabbing these animals is not for the faint-hearted.)

This question asks for recommendations to address challenges. I offer the following:

--> **Suggestion a)** The realities of the vet shortage need to be quantified and addressed. Are vet schools even teaching native animal biology and health? Does it need to be regulated that vet clinics be involved in at least one taxon of native animal and who will be responsible for paying them? Does there need to be a 'pool' of money available that vets can apply for to be reimbursed for expenses for native animal treatments? What is the Commonwealth contributing to the rehab of native wildlife? Wildlife is legally their 'property' so what support are they providing?

--> **Suggestion b)** Certainly for amphibians, the rules set by DES are **exacerbating** frog decline and need serious modification soonest. This is not just a frustrating and moral issue for those volunteering for wildlife but also the public who cares about helping frog populations and is prohibited by the latest rules established by DES in 2021. We would appreciate a meeting with the Environment Minister perhaps around April to discuss this issue in depth.

--> **Suggestion c)** If the 'rules' concerning frog keeping, frog rehab and/or frog conservation are being reviewed or considered by the department, **we want a seat at the table**. When they came up with their ridiculous keeping regs in 2021, I asked who was on the panel that determined these new regs. They argued it was a privacy issue. *No it isn't!* I suspect it was a bunch of pet shop owners since the regs were completely adjusted to favour the pet industry and not the welfare of the frogs being bandied about. Taxpayers paid for process of reviewing and changing the regs and therefore the information must be available to taxpayers. The department should not be discussing anything to do with frog rehabilitation without including us as the most experienced frog rescuers in the State!

--> **Suggestion d)** Wildlife carers are desperately needed to keep up with all the threats against wildlife that just keep escalating. How can they be more supported?

- counseling: carers see a lot of death, suffering, apathetic behaviour from the public, and unnecessary waste of animals (which could also be viewed as future population genetic resources); they also see a lot of animals that could survive quite happily in an appropriate captive situation or breeding program but the department prohibits that and insists not only that such animals with minor inconveniences be killed, they prohibit entirely the process of conservation breeding (not just for frogs). This is outrageous and is feeding frog decline in particular. Carers might need free counseling to be available so they can talk to someone experienced with the difficulties they are having to see with injured/diseased wildlife - in the same way as those in SES, paramedics, etc. can access mental and emotional support.



- it needs to be verified that wildlife rescue groups are assisting their members with vet costs. If not, why not?

- training availability: with the attrition of experienced carers, valuable knowledge is being lost that needs to be passed on to newbies in this field. While some rescue groups used to have a 'mentor system' to guide new carers, this seems to have faded away (as far as I am aware of) because of attrition. In our own case, we have our own three day training course but the student needs to travel here which is expensive. An alternative is to produce a series of videos but there would be hundreds of hours of work and specialist equipment required as well as an experienced editor. We estimate at least \$20K for such a project. We don't have it and have no chance of raising it from the public because the first priority for all income is covering the rent, elec, internet, phone, web hosting, vehicle running and animal care. There was a program drafted several years ago called the Green and Blue Economic Stimulus package to create and promote paid jobs in the QLD environment sector. It was never fully realised. This needs to be re-instated (a copy is attached to this submission). Under such a package, we might be able to hire someone to create training materials for us so that all the knowledge I have gained from working with frogs for the past 30 years is not lost when I 'depart this world'.

- ensuring more vets include wildlife: universities need to include wildlife in their curriculum; vet's might need an incentive to include wildlife and they need to be paid for their services. It is abusive to expect carers to cover this. In SEQ, there are three large wildlife care facilities and not only do they have a high public profile (for fundraising), they get money from DES. Why don't we have a well-funded wildlife hospital in Cairns? Since all the diagnostic vet labs in Qld (except Brisbane) were closed by the Newman govt, that has left a very big biosecurity hole for the entire northern half of Qld. A new problem could enter Qld via Torres Strait and the State govt might not know about it until it has progressed halfway across the state. Opening a biosecurity facility in Cairns (including diagnostic capabilities) might house a wildlife hospital as well, reducing the costs of having two separate facilities and would allow better biosecurity surveillance close to the Cape.

- if money is limited, then allocate more money for on-the-ground rescue/care and less for environmental bureaucracies: For example: DES gave \$840K to the Qld Conservation Council in 2023 for themselves and devolved funding for local conservation councils. QCC spent over \$1.3 million on salaries/super and \$167K for 'office expense' in the same period. I'm sure some of DES' money was used for administration and/or salaries (the same for rspca, Currumbin and Australia Zoo). Meanwhile our group is just barely able to keep its doors open because we can't get any government support or grants to assist with valid, essential expenses such as rent, electric, phone, internet or vehicle running. And of course, we keep getting thrown out of rental properties because they are sold so we also have to cover relocation expenses of approx \$5K each time we are forced to move - seven times already in our history. We are now in an unsuitable property that we can't get out of because of the housing crisis. However, councils provide facilities for dogs and cats - they are exotics and not a part of the Australian ecosystem. As volunteers providing a very important service, we feel like [REDACTED] step-children at a family reunion'. The kind of funding being given to bodies like QCC (which don't represent our organisation) is a slap in the face, especially when the Qld government tells us it doesn't fund 'ongoings'.

ToR 5. The extent, effectiveness and efficiency of current government support at all levels for the volunteering sector in Queensland and sustainable opportunities for improvement;

Already mentioned in the previous paragraph, we are told repeatedly by Qld government that it cannot support essential ongoings or our forced relocations. But it does support ongoings and salaries when it provides large lumps of funding to the above mentioned organisations. Without a roof over our heads, we cannot exist at all and the unique and specialised services we provide will no longer exist. I request that Qld government rethinks this policy as it is not fair to small groups like ourselves.

ToR 6. Opportunities for the Queensland Government to leverage all portfolios to support growth in volunteering across Queensland, including through hosting the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games;

The new Crisafulli govt has already cut spending but more is needed. Just cancelling the Pioneer pumped hydro project alone was a brilliant and massively cost saving measure. But the Qld budget is not out of the woods yet. I do not believe we can afford to host the Olympics. Australia has already held them twice - let another country host it that has not had them before. Two of the top priorities in this State will be the housing issue and youth crime and I will be doing separate submissions on those. The Olympics is way down the list in my opinion.

I have no comments to offer on the remaining ToR.

I would like to thank you for reading and also extend the offer to continue this conversation. As mentioned earlier, we would like to meet with the Environment minister to discuss the many issues we have with DES' policies/regs when it comes to frog populations.

Thank you for conducting this inquiry.

Sincerely,
Deborah Pergolotti
Founding President
Frog Safe, Inc.
FNQ





TROPICAL NORTH QUEENSLAND

GREEN
& BLUE

ECONOMIC
STIMULUS
PACKAGE

JULY 2020

IGNITING THE **SMART GREEN CAPITAL** OF AUSTRALIA

KEY SUPPORTERS



KEY CONTACTS

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SUMMARY

Tourism is the economic engine of Tropical North Queensland (TNQ) and it has been hit hard by the Coronavirus pandemic. The prosperity of our community and the health of our natural areas are intricately linked. The natural environment underpins our economy as well as the social and cultural fabric of our communities.

The Green and Blue Economic Stimulus Package will provide immediate employment and economic activity to offset the impact on jobs of the tourism industry slow down. It will also support a transformative approach to increasing our region's longer-term economic resilience and employment while protecting its natural assets. At the nexus of the two best managed World Heritage Areas, this initiative will help position TNQ as the smart green capital of Australia.

\$180 million of additional funding over three years is required to fund this package, which will create 510 jobs per year¹, according to analyses by Natural Capital Economics, and be a catalyst to grow new industry sectors. \$20 million is required to kick-start the initiative in the first year.



¹ Tropical North Queensland Green and Blue Economic Stimulus Package, Economic Impacts – Phase 1, NCEconomics, 15 July 2020

KEY CHALLENGES

TNQ ECONOMIC STRESSORS

coronavirus

downturn in domestic tourism after bushfires

severe flooding in 2019/20

unprecedented coral bleaching events (2016, 2017 & 2020)



INTRODUCTION

The practical and innovative land and sea management, restoration and other activities being proposed in this package will maintain employment and upskill employees during economic recovery and create new business opportunities. Long-term career pathways for young people and First Nations peoples, who are most affected, will be a focus.

THE PROGRAM HAS TWO KEY ELEMENTS:

- rapid creation of additional jobs and business opportunities to stabilise the economy by expanding successful 'shovel-ready' projects
- increased resilience and strength of the regional economy by funding innovative catalytic initiatives to reduce the 'boom and bust' cycles faced by the region

This package has been developed in consultation with a broad range of stakeholder organisations from tourism and economic development, First Nations, conservation, local government, research, and education sectors, as well as the management authorities of the Wet Tropics Rainforest and Great Barrier Reef.

The Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Areas are significant economic drivers, generating an economic contribution of over \$11 billion per annum. Tourism generates \$3.5 billion annually² in TNQ and was hit first and hit hardest by Coronavirus. Agriculture generates \$1.62 billion annually³ and is also facing challenges. Modelling by Ernst & Young and ID⁴ shows that TNQ will face a higher and more

prolonged unemployment rate and economic downturn than other regions in Queensland and nationally. Our tourism industry is heavily reliant on:

- maintaining a skilled pool of young people (hardest hit demographic)
- continued health and beauty of our reef and rainforest
- unique and authentic visitor experiences that are aligned with stewardship values

Coral bleaching, bushfires and cyclones present a significant ongoing risk to the Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef as well as the industries, communities and ecosystem services provided by these natural systems. Even our Wet Tropics rainforest, the world's oldest rainforest, is now at risk of bushfires, with TNQ experiencing one of the driest wet seasons on record in 2019/20.

Our region needs support to get key industries back on track, but also to continue to build resilience in our economy, environment and community to ensure that we can weather future economic, health and natural crises.

² Tourism Tropical North Queensland Tourism Fact File - National Visitor Survey year Ending September 2019

³ <https://economy.id.com.au/fnqroc/value-of-agriculture>

⁴ Delivering economic stimulus through the conservation and land management sector, Economic Impact assessment, 25 June 2020 & <https://economy.id.com.au/fnqroc/covid19> - 7 May 2020

THE SOLUTION

GREEN & BLUE STIMULUS PACKAGE FOR TNQ

A stimulus package that invests in sustaining and regenerating our natural assets, on land and in our marine environments. This package has two components:

1) immediate stimulus to address our short-term economic challenges and deliver jobs now and

2) an innovative recovery from the downturn that is a catalyst for increasing the diversity and future resilience of our regional economy.



PLAYING TO OUR NATURAL ADVANTAGE

Natural resource management and conservation is a well-established and proven sector in TNQ. Higher economic and employment multipliers (1.6-2.6 (economic) and 1.5-3.8 (employment)) than many other sectors.⁵

⁵ Estimating the Size and Impact of the Ecological Restoration Economy, BenDor et al, 2015



THE PROGRAMS

The TNQ Green & Blue Stimulus Package consists of three programs. Each program contains 'shovel-ready' projects to provide economic recovery, jobs and benefits to our natural environment while transitioning to a stronger and more resilient community.

These initiatives will drive multiple benefits across our region, delivered by local organisations, and attract increased private sector investment and new skills to the region.

A summary of potential projects is included in Appendix B. The proposals are an indication of the kind of 'shovel-ready' projects that are ready to create additional jobs now and will evolve as further consultation is undertaken.



The TNQ Green & Blue Stimulus Package consists of three key programs.

COMPONENT ONE:

Scaling up 'shovel-ready' work

PROGRAM 1:

Boots on the ground - Land restoration and management

PROGRAM 2:

Fins in the water – Coral to coast reef resilience

Investment in natural resource management and conservation sectors is a simple way to create a large number of jobs quickly. These projects will scale up existing on-ground activities to provide more jobs and a rapid economic stimulus into the community. This will boost immediate employment and business opportunities for those most affected by the economic impacts of the Coronavirus.

COMPONENT TWO:

Innovative recovery leading to long-term resilience

PROGRAM 3:

Igniting the Smart Green Capital of Australia

This is an opportunity to rebuild TNQ's economy to become stronger and more resilient to future economic shocks. Industry and all levels of government in TNQ agree that the region should identify opportunities that embrace the green and blue economy with a new level of intent and serious player in the global natural capital economy industry

Component 2 will leverage investment and initiate 'building block' projects to support the realisation of the vision for TNQ to become the Smart Green Capital of Australia⁶. Building block projects include:

- funding feasibility studies for innovative technologies, industries, and recovery solutions to ensure future investment results in successful and tangible change

- supporting the expansion of existing businesses that are demonstrating results and align with the Smart Green Capital of Australia vision
- igniting innovation in research and technology to create new industries using circular and blue economy solutions
- developing training and education programs to create meaningful employment and career pathways for young people and First Nations peoples
- introducing market-based finance mechanisms that can provide diversified income for landholders and industry through green finance
- commencing zero emissions and waste pilot programs, creating innovation in jobs and reducing carbon impacts
- increasing the amount of affordable renewable energy and electric transport, capitalising on the Electric Super Highway, the world's longest electric super highway in a single state

Each program area includes a focus on training, education, skills development, science and research to enable the existing workforce to remain in the region, be employed and upskilled, while also attracting new skills, more entrepreneurs and investment. A more detailed explanation of each of the programs is included in Appendix B.

Governance

The TNQ Green and Blue stimulus package has initially been driven by a coalition of organisations across the region, coordinated by CAFNEC, WTMA and Terrain NRM. A skills-based board or committee, representing a cross-section of TNQ, will be responsible for selecting projects and overseeing the implementation of the programs. See Appendix A for more details.

⁶ The Smart Green Capital initiative will initially be championed by the Cairns Regional Council in its FNQROC role and will quickly transition to become an industry-led, regional-level initiative with an appropriate funding and governance model.



Photo courtesy of Pablo Cogollos

FUNDING REQUIRED

The funding requested to implement the overall stimulus package is estimated to be \$180 Million over three years.

This is a small proportion of the total economic value generated from the World Heritage assets (over \$11 billion per annum). An initial investment of \$20 million is required for the first year to kick-start the shovel-ready projects. The remaining \$160 million is to be phased over the three year duration of the program.

TNQ GREEN & BLUE ECONOMIC INITIAL STIMULUS FUNDING REQUIRED (INITIAL 3 YEAR FUNDING)

PROGRAM	SUMMARY	FUNDING
PROGRAM 1 Boots on the ground - Land and habitat resilience	On-ground action to increase resilience, capture carbon and reconnect landscapes including traditional fire management, habitat regeneration, pest and weed management. Science and improvement of water quality flowing to the reef.	\$50 Million
PROGRAM 2 Fins in the water - coral to coast reef resilience	Coral reef regeneration, mangrove planting and science.	\$50 Million
PROGRAM 3 Igniting The smart green capital of Australia	Undertake regional mapping and rapid feasibility studies of most promising industry and job-creating opportunities and accelerate expansion of existing businesses, industries and initiatives that align with our vision to become the Smart Green Capital of Australia.	\$80 Million
TOTAL INITIAL 3 YEAR FUNDING		\$180 Million

The funding has been nominally allocated across the three programs. An investment prospectus will be developed during the initial phase of work, which will inform the final allocation of funding between the three programs and identify additional investment opportunities for private and philanthropic organisations.



APPENDIX A

GOVERNANCE

Principles for establishing the governance, planning and delivery of the TNQ Green & Blue Economic Stimulus Package

The TNQ Green and Blue stimulus package has initially been driven by a coalition of organisations across the region, coordinated by CAFNEC, WTMA and Terrain NRM. A skills-based board or committee, representing a cross-section of TNQ, will be responsible for selecting projects and overseeing the implementation of the programs. An interim steering committee comprising of CAFNEC, WTMA, Terrain NRM, and other members of the coalition will develop the governance model and terms of reference for the board/committee. The principles to establish the governance and the planning and implementation of the stimulus package are as follows:

COLLABORATION AND PROJECT CO-DESIGN WITH FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES and delivery across all relevant sectors.

BENEFITS FOR INDIGENOUS ORGANISATIONS, First Nations Peoples and young people through employment, business investment partnerships, local procurement and capacity development.

ALIGN WITH EXISTING STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND PLANS that enable the region to become the smart green capital of Australia.

BUILD ON EXISTING PROJECTS where possible to enable rapid impact on jobs and business opportunities.

DEVELOP MEANINGFUL EMPLOYMENT and long-term industry resilience.

DELIVER ON-GROUND ACTIONS that increase the resilience of the region's natural assets, reduce emissions, reconnect habitat and demonstrate active stewardship.

STRENGTHENING OF LOCAL SUPPLY CHAINS and support for partnerships across sectors to improve resilience.

MULTIPLE ECONOMIC, social, environmental, educational, and cultural co-benefits.

The funding provided for the Green and Blue stimulus package will be in addition to existing or planned longer-term funding programs to improve TNQ's natural assets.

APPENDIX B

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS



PROGRAM 1: Boots on the ground: land restoration and management

TNQ is the most biologically diverse region in Australia. The Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, which contains the world's oldest rainforests, has been identified as the second most irreplaceable World Heritage Area in the world. A 2015 assessment measured the economic value of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area as over \$5.2 billion per annum⁷. It contributes to direct and indirect economic output and household income, as well as 13,351 direct and indirect jobs.

Issues

The Wet Tropics is a traditionally high rainfall region, but extreme heat events and bushfires caused by a changing climate are becoming a very real and unprecedented threat to our unique rainforests and biodiversity. We have observed a sustained decline in some populations of endangered and keystone species and mass deaths of some native animals following recent extreme weather events. And, as

never before, the rainforest is at risk of burning, and feasible solutions are needed to build the resilience of these internationally significant forests.

While fire management can reduce risks to the rainforest, property, livelihoods and community safety, the deficiencies of modern hazard reduction have become clear and there is much to learn from the traditional Aboriginal practice of burning country.

Program goals

- scaling-up programs quickly to generate jobs and economic stimulus
- cross-tenure schedule of on-ground land management actions
- increased climate resilience for reef and rainforest
- protection of threatened, endangered and keystone species
- improved water quality runoff flowing to the reef
- collaboration with broad sectors from Indigenous ranger groups, water and Landcare groups, environmental NGOs, natural resource management organisations, and vocational education training and research organisations
- First Nations co-design of innovative land management actions
- partnerships with the agriculture, tourism and other industry sectors to support land stewardship and improved industry profitability

Key components

- pest and weed management
- soil improvement
- tree planting and restoration in priority wildlife corridors
- targeted landscape and riverbank repairs to reduce sediment and fertilizer runoff, and increase land productivity
- traditional fire management
- scientific research, monitoring and evaluation of restoration and management activities

Ready to deploy solutions

The TNQ region has many capable organisations that could quickly deploy solutions that create jobs and stimulate the economy by utilising:

LANDSCAPE REVEGETATION AND REHABILITATION projects targeted at priority areas to improve native habitat, increase resilience and protect high-value tourism sites, soils and carbon stocks

TRADITIONAL/INDIGENOUS FIRE MANAGEMENT PROJECT LED BY INDIGENOUS RANGER GROUPS to develop capacity to manage fires, work with landholders and oversee cultural burning programs. These projects will improve fire resilience and protect the country across private and public landscapes in the Wet Tropics region. Outcomes will include habitat protection, carbon capture and improved soil and water quality

LARGE-SCALE INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES modelled on the successful Crown-of-thorns starfish program to address key pest threats in the rainforests

REDEPLOYING THE UNDER-UTILISED FLEET OF TOURISM VEHICLES and staff to support and undertake land restoration activities and scientific research and monitoring

EXPANDING THE SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH, MONITORING AND EVALUATION program to ensure this region remains a world leader in tropical rainforest ecosystem management and becomes a world leader in native vegetation restoration, protection of endangered species, carbon farming and climate change resilience

A 2015 assessment measured the economic value of the **Wet Tropics World Heritage Area** as over **\$5.2 billion per annum⁷**.

⁷ Wet Tropics Management Authority (2015) State of Wet Tropics Report 2014/15: Economic Value of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

PROGRAM 2: Fins in the water - Reef Resilience - coral to coast

The Great Barrier Reef is one of the seven natural wonders of the world and one of the two main reasons international visitors choose to visit Australia. It has been valued as a \$56 billion asset⁸, supports approximately 64,000 jobs, of which 40,000 are tourism-related, and it generates \$6.4 billion in expenditure annually. The Reef is one of the most significant economic drivers for TNQ.

Issues

The Great Barrier Reef and the tourism industry are facing significant challenges from the impacts of COVID-19 and climate change, which is increasing the risk of damage from coral bleaching and cyclonic events. The combined effects of degraded water quality, cyclones, crown-of-thorns starfish, bleaching events and other impacts have reduced coral cover in the Central Great Barrier Reef from 40% in the 1960s to 12% in 2018. The minimum coral cover required for reefs to be self-sustaining is 14%.

Prior to COVID-19, widespread negative media coverage was impacting the number of paying visitors to the Reef. Visitor numbers have reportedly fallen by over 15% since 2016 and they continued to decline to the start of 2020. Urgent and strategic action is now needed to help the Reef and the Reef tourism industry simultaneously regenerate.

Program goals

- coordinated suite of practical in-ocean projects that improve coral and mangrove cover, native fish habitat, increase resilience of high-value tourism sites and increase carbon sequestration
- increased climate resilience for reef and coastal ecosystems through tangible action to address the impacts of a changing climate

- a targeted strategy to regenerate affected high-value reefs (80% of all tourism takes place in less than 7% of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park) through coral restoration activities
- Implementation achieved through a partnership between reef tourism operators, dive staff, conservation NGOs, Indigenous sea ranger programs, research and science organisations, GBRMPA, tertiary and vocational education training providers amongst others

Ready-to-deploy solutions

There are a number of ready-to-deploy solutions that will create jobs and business opportunities, increase skills and improve the condition and resilience of high-value tourism locations by:

EXPANDING THE NUMBER OF EXISTING MANGROVE PLANTING PROJECTS in priority locations

EXPANDING THE NUMBER OF EXISTING OCEAN-BASED CORAL NURSERIES and establishing new nurseries in other high-value tourism reefs

COLLECTING CORALS OF OPPORTUNITY (corals that have broken naturally or accidentally off reefs) and attaching these to existing reefs or creating new reefs; rapidly evolving techniques such as capturing and growing coral larvae (baby corals) and seeding them on the reef

REDEPLOYING THE UNDER-UTILISED FLEET OF REEF TOURISM VESSELS and staff to support and undertake scientific research coral restoration and mangrove planting programs

EXPANDING SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH, MONITORING AND EVALUATION PROGRAMS for this region to remain a world leader in marine science and become a world leader in coral reef, mangrove and seagrass restoration

PROGRAM 3: Igniting the Smart Green Capital of Australia

Since the pilots' strike in 1989, TNQ has suffered from a number of major economic shocks that have created high levels of long-term unemployment and a roller coaster ride of 'boom and bust' cycles. This includes 9/11, the Ansett collapse, SARS and the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, which stubbornly lingered on for a decade.

TNQ will face a higher and more prolonged unemployment rate and economic downturn from the Coronavirus pandemic than most other regions. This time our recovery needs to be different – one that is focused on building a stronger environment and economy that is more resilient to future disasters.

Program goals

- build economic recovery and ensure our recovery is not 'business as usual'
- create more local jobs through the development of self-sustaining industries that support and complement tourism, agriculture and education
- develop accredited training programs to grow careers (specific skills relating to interpretation will develop world class tour guides, providing multiple avenues for future employment)
- create education pathways that grow careers, providing multiple avenues for future employment and entrepreneurship in our region
- develop green-trade opportunities, diversifying economic opportunities for the agricultural, tourism and conservation sectors
- create new industries and higher employment opportunities through science and research innovation
- implement cross-sectoral partnerships of industry, civic leaders, Traditional Owners, conservation NGOs, research organisations, vocational and tertiary education providers, and government amongst others to build a strong and sustainable community

- position our region as the Smart Green Capital of Australia and a world leader in the development of prosperous, resilient communities who are stewards of the two world's best managed World Heritage Areas

Ready-to-deploy solutions

The program will deliver self-sustaining industries, accelerate the development of locally designed market-based investment mechanisms such as Reef and Cassowary Credits and secure investment through other green finance opportunities. This will provide long-term private sector investment and reward landholders and Traditional Owners for regeneration and conservation of natural resources.

RAPID FEASIBILITY STUDIES that allow for the region to identify key future opportunities and ensure we are taking the best opportunities for an innovative recovery.

SUPPORT EXPANSION OF EXISTING BUSINESSES AND INDUSTRIES that align with the Smart Green Capital of Australia vision through supporting removal of barriers, access to capital, skills and networks.

BUILDING ON THE TTNQ MARKETING CAMPAIGN "SEE GREAT. LEAVE GREATER" by enabling visitors to invest and contribute to regenerating the environment and economy while supporting a thriving Indigenous culture. It is vital that visitors are genuinely participating in the solution, not the problem. The project will include:

- attracting visitors to TNQ by demonstrating they are part of the solution
- designing a sustainable business model that includes visitor involvement and investment in conservation, research programs and cultural tourism development.
- further developing existing accredited master tour guide programs (see below)
- developing and implementing zero emissions operations and waste targets

⁸ Deloitte Access Economics - At what price? The economic, social and cultural value of the Great Barrier Reef

PROGRAM 3: Igniting the Smart Green Capital of Australia (continued)

- developing a World Heritage Area accreditation program for tourism operators to ensure they are providing experiences that respect and uphold world heritage values

CREATING RAINFOREST PROTECTIVE HABITAT FOR AT-RISK SPECIES. Protective habitat measures – actions to increase protective habitat to provide shelter during climatic extremes. Measures such as artificial refugia, biobanking, genetic editing and possible ex-situ conservation (e.g. captive breeding) and assisted migration in collaboration with Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples.

EXPANDING THE SUCCESSFUL MASTER REEF GUIDE PROGRAM, which is delivered in partnership with the tourism industry, to upskill and educate existing marine tourism staff, grow careers, enable businesses to better manage coral reefs, and provide a higher value customer experience.

DESIGNING INNOVATIVE BUSINESS MODELS that seek to identify multiple sources of revenue to increase the resilience of businesses and communities.

EXPLORING BIODISCOVERY OPPORTUNITIES, which involves the collection and use of native biological material (e.g. plants, animals and other organisms) for commercial applications (e.g. pharmaceuticals and insecticides). The Queensland Government is expected to introduce new legislation in 2020 that will provide a framework to commercialise opportunities benefiting Traditional Owners and the regional economy. The Great Barrier Reef and Wet Tropics rainforests have some of the highest levels of biodiversity on the planet and this region has the potential to become a hotspot for discovering and commercialising new opportunities.

TRANSITIONING TO A MORE RESILIENT AND PROSPEROUS ECONOMY with projects for a low carbon and zero waste economy. Identifying and de-risking opportunities, seeking investment for new projects, up-skilling capabilities, and jobs in low carbon industries. The transition will lower the overall cost to our environment and economy and return greater the benefits for investment. Opportunities to include:

- Localising the economy to ensure the basic needs of business and the community come from our region
- Creating bio-based high value products to replace plastics and other raw materials
- Funding and expanding the Indigenous bush food network for local catering and export
- Using waste as a resource to create economic opportunities e.g. using biological nutrients to regenerate the environment.
- Increase affordable, regional, clean renewable energy production
- Using innovative technology inspired by nature (biomimetics/biomimicry) to solve complex problems
- Developing zero-emissions public assets including public transport and facilities
- Higher-value and diversified agricultural production income streams e.g. through bio-based products, alternative energy supplies and market-based income for land stewardship.

APPENDIX C

PROJECT LIST



Coordinated under a partnership between Terrain, CAFNEC and WTMA, the programs and projects have been identified from Tourism Tropical North Queensland (TTNQ), Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (FNQROC), Advance Cairns, Central Queensland University, James Cook University, Reef and Rainforest Research Centre (RRRC), Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), Tribal Ecologist Network, Firesticks Alliance, Citizens of the Great Barrier Reef, the Cairns Young Chamber of Commerce, Regional Development Australia Tropical North, Mulgrave Landcare and Catchment, Kuranda Envirocare, Trees for the Evelyn and Atherton Tablelands (TREAT) and others.

The conservation land management sector generally has higher economic and employment multipliers (1.6-2.6 (economic) and 1.5-3.8 (employment)) than many other sectors.

The types of roles available in this sector range from manual and low-skilled work to high-end research and professional services. The focus of this initiative is to better utilise existing capacity in the community.

The project list will continue to develop as further consultation occurs and as the package is rolled-out. The list of projects can be provided on request.

The funding provided for this stimulus package will not replace existing funding programs and will not remove the need for longer-term measures to improve TNQ's natural assets.



IGNITING THE **SMART GREEN CAPITAL** OF AUSTRALIA

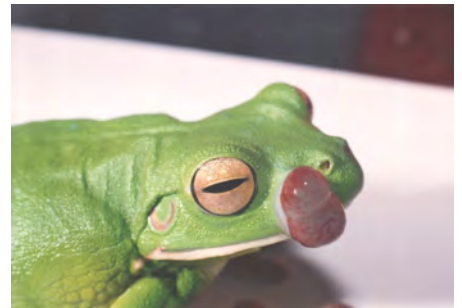


Financial support for Australian NFP's needs urgent reform

Since our inception, our rehab group has received over 3,600 frogs (as of writing) and we have documented the existence of cancer in amphibians (the world's highest levels), malformations, flesh-eating disorders, apparent immune deficiency, heavy parasite loads and poor public behaviour in the form of deliberate chemical burns. We are perhaps the only frog conservation group in the country advocating for research for these relatively recent occurrences.

The vast majority of our expenses are involved in having a facility to base our operations in (office, animal care space, storage of supplies, meeting space). We have to pay rent, electric, phone, website hosting, internet and run a vehicle. For our 26 years existence, it is the public that has minimally financed our existence through donations. That is no longer possible because of official actions such as continued interest rate rises, inflation, and the outrageous rental crisis which has killed off any disposable money the public had to share with charities.

Sadly frogs are not koalas and they have not attracted the level of financial support that is actually needed to arrest their continued severe decline. Neither the government nor funding bodies support our infrastructure/operational costs despite the fact that they are valid expenses and critical to our ability to do our job/exist.

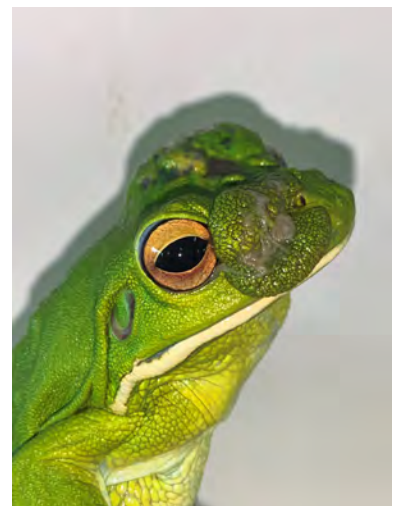


Enter the rental crisis. Our group is modest and our Founding President is a pensioner. We rent a house to include a live-in volunteer in the private market. We have been forced to relocate **six times** previously at massive expense and were turfed out **again** in mid 2023 (our 7th move) because the facility was sold. Donations have been declining since the bushfires (we're not in a bushfire area so we missed out) and then the 'disease thing' and now the severe squeeze on the public purse.

We are not the only charity that is experiencing a downturn in support but we are the only one who has been forced to move over and over again while existing on a shoestring budget. Affordable rentals are no longer possible in the worsening crisis situation. We could be the first charity to 'go under' because of the rental crisis! If the work that charities do is actually valued by the government, it will have to create new models to support NFP's.

Our group's work **MUST** continue because:

- We are presently engaged in documenting cancer in QLD amphibians so that the escalating cancer problem can be included on the 'official radar'. Our receiving doors need to remain open so cancer cases throughout QLD can be received, documented and included on official databases.
- We are discussing another project concerning malformed frogs with a staff person at Latrobe University so our receiving doors must remain open to capture relevant cases.
- Despite my 26 year history of frog rehab, there are still relatively few carers and veterinarians experienced in this field which is why the

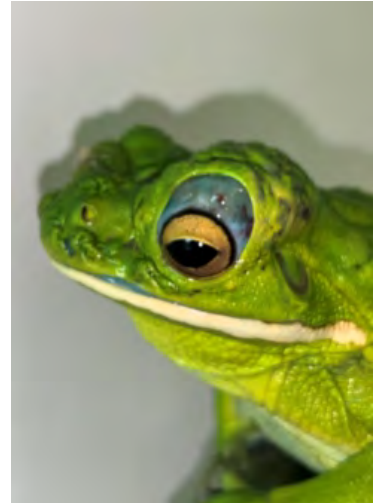


national die-off of frogs was so severe over the 2021 and 2022 winters. Our experience is sorely needed to support the research of these die-offs.

- No-one has been trained to replace our group so if we are not here to assist the public and the compromised, suffering animals they find, then those animals will either be taken in by those who don't have the experience to help them or they will be left to suffer in the wild until they die. This is an intolerable situation. Our ability to run a training program depends on our operation remaining intact.

Our situation demonstrates why reform is needed when it comes to how financial support is dispensed to community groups. Support for ongoing is provided by Qld government to rspca and other wildlife facilities in SEQ so why are we told ongoing cannot be supported?

- The overwhelming majority of costs involved in our operation are not covered by any grant program, public or private.
- While some other groups are given facilities to run their base from (YAPS, C4, Cassa coast Paws and Claws), we are forced to rent in the exorbitant private market and, every time we get booted out because the place sells, we have to take that expense out of the donations the public gave us to care for animals.
- When there is the odd grant that we might qualify to apply for, our chances of getting the grant are low because larger, better resourced groups with professional support get them.



We are suggesting new pathways of support from the government or else charities like ours will go the way of the dinosaurs.

1) Some time ago when the NRM groups were setup, one of their functions was to receive a lump sum from the government which could be devolved to smaller groups like ours in their service area. Our NRM is Terrain and they have not been involved in devolved funding for at least 15 years. Funding for devolved purposes needs to be restored to NRM groups and the dispensing of that money should be based on merit and need rather than competition.

2) Government policy ignores essential ongoing expenses required for the existence of an organisation and this needs urgent review. Without such a review, organisations will start to collapse in the vacuum of current public support. As it would cost the government at least TEN times as much to run an equivalent setup to what our group does (a budget breakdown is available on request), supporting a group to continue as a NFP should be seen as saving the government money since the work being done by NFP's such as ours could continue at a fraction of the real costs.

3) The Tropical North Queensland Green & Blue Economic Stimulus package needs to be resurrected (the 2020 version can be provided). This package allows job creation in the environment market and would help struggling community groups to hire staff. This is a growing problem because volunteers have become scarce since the 'covid disturbance'. There was significant 'collateral damage' done by the over-reaching policies forced on the Australian public over the past few years and one result is that volunteering has basically collapsed. The rental crisis is also to blame since it has pushed thousands of people out of their homes and into their cars or the street. Homeless people don't volunteer and are struggling just to stay alive. People under mortgage stress don't volunteer either because they are chasing more paid work to help pay the bills. The Green & Blue package would provide manpower to groups

that no longer have enough people to keep their work going, create jobs that lead to better outcomes, support mental health by providing paid work that is morally satisfying, and allow young people interested in attaining environmental skills to earn a living.

4) There needs to be a running grant for emergency expenses incurred by NFP, especially those housing wildlife, to enable them to cope with forced relocations or other disasters out of their control. Any group having to rent a facility in the private market is already getting squeezed by appalling unregulated rents. I find it interesting that shelters for exotic dogs and cats are often provided by local government but native animal facilities are not. People engaged in wildlife rehab who are also renters usually have difficulty finding places to live because of their beneficial activities. The rental crisis is making this worse.

We see so many statements from politicians that you value the work done by volunteers and NFP groups - but saying how valuable our group is does not pay the rent or service the group's vehicle.

We are keen to discuss these suggestions with you. Please contact us to set up an appointment.

on behalf of suffering frogs everywhere -
Deborah Pergolotti
Founding President
Frog Safe, Inc.
winner: Centenary Medal, Cassowary award, Legacy Builder
award
<https://www.frogsafe.org.au/>



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