# Summary report on the 2018-21 consultation and review of the Central Queensland Sustainability Strategy 2030

## Introduction

Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA) is part of a national network of Natural Resource Management (NRM) organisations who plan and deliver projects that protect, rehabilitate and promote sustainable use of natural assets. As central Queensland’s leading NRM body, FBA works in partnership with community, industry and government to maintain environmental assets, encourage adoption of best management practices, and protect our Region’s special places and species.

Since 1997, FBA has been responsible for producing and maintaining a NRM plan that is reflective of the unique needs and circumstances of the central Queensland communities within the Fitzroy Basin and surrounding coastal catchments (the Fitzroy region). This plan is known as the Central Queensland Sustainability Strategy 2030 (CQSS2030).

As a service provider for the Australian and Queensland Governments, FBA reviews the NRM Plan regularly to ensure its alignment with State and National environment priorities and to consider where further value can be achieved. Reviewing the NRM Plan also allows for engagement with key regional stakeholders to ensure the relevance of the Plan for its remaining lifetime.

The 2018-21 NRM Plan review and updates are a requirement of and funded by the Australian Government National Landcare Program - Regional Land Partnerships. This summary report provides an overview of the consultation and reviews undertaken, stakeholders involved, and key outcomes as follows:

1 – Desktop review

2 – 2020 regional natural assets community survey and report

3 – 2021 technical specialist workshop

4 – First Nations’ consultation

5 – Regional councils’ consultation

6 – Internal Fitzroy Basin Association reviews

7 – Independent CQSS targets review

8 – What next? Recommendations from the 2018-21 CQSS 2030 review

## 1 – Desktop review

This desktop review of primarily publicly available documents was undertaken in early 2020 to identify linkages (and gaps) between the CQSS2030 and global, federal, state, regional and local priorities including matters of outstanding universal values, and matters of National, State and local environmental significance. Undertaken by a private contractor and then reviewed by FBA staff, this desktop review resulted in three key outputs to inform the 2021 revision and updates to CQSS2030. The three identified key outputs were:

1. A map of CQSS2030’s alignment with key Australian and Queensland government priorities.
2. A preliminary map of CQSS2030’s alignment with relevant strategies, plans, policies, acts and international documents relating to both the natural environment and human dimensions.
3. Recommendations to improve the useability, accessibility, and relevance of the CQSS2030 in consideration of multiple stakeholders for multiple purposes.

**Appendix A** contains excerpts from the review which expand on the three identified outputs above. Requests for a full copy of the review can be made to [Fitzroy Basin Association](https://www.fba.org.au/contact-us/).

## 2 – 2020 regional natural assets community survey and report

In 2020, Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA) launched a region-wide community survey to inform updates of the CQSS2030. In addition to ensuring community aspirations were adequately captured and reflected in plan updates, the survey and subsequent data analysis was undertaken to identify ways to improve the relevance and useability of the CQSS2030, ascertain public opinion on the region’s natural assets, identify regional contributions to looking after the natural assets as well as raise awareness of the CQSS and region’s natural assets. Due to the 2020 COVID19 pandemic, an incentivised online survey was determined the safest and most effective method of reaching a diverse and representative cross-section of the community throughout the region.

The survey, hosted on FBA’s website was opened on May 28 to anyone ‘who works, lives, studies or recreates’ in the Fitzroy region, and closed on July 18, 2020. Promoted by FBA through existing contacts and networks, social media as well as in local traditional media (local newspapers, radio and TV news) it resulted in 1278 responses used for data analysis. The survey was designed in consultation with an independent research assistant, who also analysed the data and prepared a survey report in collaboration with FBA.

While not a representative sample of the regional population (compared with 2018 ABS data), findings from the data present the most comprehensive insight into the region’s opinion of, and relation to the region’s natural resources to date (at time of writing, FBA were not aware of any comparable data sets or reports). Findings indicate that the majority of the region is unaware of the region’s NRM plan, the CQSS:2030. Findings also indicate that asset condition has been stable to declining since 2015 according to public opinion. The most common activities people undertake to help look after natural assets fall within ‘personal lifestyle choices’, and most people perceive these activities to have a small and/or very localised impact on the state of the natural assets. Soil and climate and air are considered to be the most important natural assets to the region, and the predominant aspiration for the region over the coming 10 years is maintenance or improvement of the region’s natural assets. There were a number of statistically significant differences found within the regional population - mostly commonly based on age, stakeholder type and location within the region. These differences are detailed in the complete survey report.

A summary of the 2020 survey process and outcomes is contained in **Appendix B**. Requests for further information about the results of the survey can be made to [Fitzroy Basin Association](https://www.fba.org.au/contact-us/).

## 3 – 2021 technical specialist workshop

Over 50 technical specialists were invited to participate in a 2-day workshop to discuss and review the existing CQSS2030 assets, key attributes, objectives, indicators and strategies, as well as suggest relevant targets.

A total of 41 participants from 20 different businesses and organisations participated, including representatives from GBRMPA, BHP, DNRME, DES, CQU, DAF and AIMS. Recommendations from the six asset groups have been integrated into the 2021 revisions of the CQSS2030 under the Our Plan pages.

Participants also expressed strong interest in working together over coming years to improve regional understanding of asset conditions and trends and improve the ability to report on them. The discussions and concerns raised in the 2021 technical specialist are therefore also reflected in the recommendations outlined in Section 8 - What next? Recommendations from the 2018-21 CQSS2030 review.

A summary of the 2021 technical specialist workshop participants, agenda, aims and outcomes is contained in **Appendix C**.

## 4 – First Nations consultation

Recognising the importance of an equitable approach to involve First Nations in natural resource management (NRM) planning, all sixteen First Nations in the Fitzroy region were invited to participate in natural resource management consultations in March 2021, with the understanding that consultation would be a staged approach over time and require the leveraging of additional resources. Three consultations were anticipated between April and June 2021, to embed First Nation perspectives into the CQSS:2030 website update.

This involved contacting each First Nation through their nominated or preferred point of contact and sharing a project flyer for consideration. Ten of the sixteen First Nations showed positive interest in the project and were provided with a scope of work outlining the purpose, consultation questions and an invitation to quote to undertake the consultation with Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA).

Consultations were undertaken with Bidjara (May 2021), Wadja (June 2021) and Kanolu (July 2021) Peoples. As the new CQSS2030 website will function as a living document, updates will continue to embed consultations from other First Nations as they arise.

**Appendix D** contains a summary report outlining First Nations invitees, participants, and outcomes from the March-July 2021 consultation.

## 5 – Regional council consultation

The Fitzroy Region overlaps 12 Local Government Areas (or council areas), who are also involved in looking after the region’s environment and natural resources. When and as appropriate, Fitzroy Basin Association meets regularly with councils to discuss matters of shared environmental concern and interest.

Six of the seven councils that mostly or completely fall within the Fitzroy Region participated in the CQSS2030 review process by responding to a request to verify or, where necessary, update findings of the desktop review (outlined in Section 1, output 2 on page 2). This ensured relevant council strategies, plans, policies and programs that support natural asset management and community wellbeing were considered along with ongoing dialogue in the review and updates of the CQSS2030.

**Appendix E** provides a map and names of the councils who participated in this process.

## 6 – Internal Fitzroy Basin Association reviews and updates

A total of five internal reviews were undertaken by a team of FBA staff (listed in **Appendix F**) to inform the planning, implementation and finalisation of the 2018-21 CQSS2030 review, as outlined below.

### 2018 review against Regional Land Partnership (RLP) 5year outcomes and investment priorities

This initial review mapped alignment of the CQSS2030 against RLP 5 year outcomes and investment priorities, as well as assessed requirements under the Australian Government RLP funding agreement with Fitzroy Basin Association to review and update the CQSS2030. The RLP 5 year outcomes, investment priorities and funding agreement requirements are detailed in **Appendix G**.

### Regional Monitoring and Reporting desktop review

Undertaken by FBA’s Environment team, this review mapped publicly available monitoring and reporting programs and activities undertaken within the region against the six CQSS2030 natural assets. Information was obtained from Queensland and Australian government, Australian Environmental Grantmakers network, and citizen science project finder databases. Results were then peer reviewed by the 2021 Technical specialist workshop participants. While not considered complete, over 85 programs or initiatives conducted by more than 40 different organisations were identified. This information was used to guide discussions about monitoring and reporting gaps and logistics issues at the 2021 Technical specialist workshop (refer Section 3) and will be used to inform future working group discussions and outcomes (refer Section 8).

### Protected species review

An in-depth review of all threatened species located within the Fitzroy region listed under State and National legislation was performed by FBA’s Environment team. This involved determining for each species relevant threatening processes, habitats utilised and the recommended management actions to prevent further decline. Information was sourced from within individual species recovery plans, conservation advice, threat abatement plans, scientific literature and other relevant plans and strategies. This information will be updated as species plans are reviewed, and new scientific information becomes available.

### Whole of 2018-21 consultation review

Staff from FBA’s regional engagement and environment teams spent more than three weeks reviewing and synthesising outcomes from the 2018-21 consultation process (Sections 1-6c), culminating in updates to the CQSS2030 plan and website. Updates to the CQSS2030 plan, including changes to key attributes and proposed targets, were drafted and then reviewed by ten FBA staff from land management, conservation, social sciences, water quality and climate change professions. The updated CQSS2030 plan was then submitted for independent review (refer Section 7), the outcomes from which will be used to inform future working group discussions and outcomes (refer Section 8). Updates to the CQSS2030 website were developed in consultation with FBA’s communications specialists and also incorporated findings from Section 6e below. This has resulted in a significantly modified CQSS2030 website.

### ‘State of’ desktop review

FBA staff responsible for writing content for the updated CQSS2030 website undertook additional desktop research on the current state of the environment, economy, society and climate reports. Preferred information sources were Australian and Queensland government department websites, and independent organisations whose reports are underpinned by reputable research. Where possible the most recent updates have been used and focus on information available between 2014 and 2021. A full list of references used to update CQSS2030 web content is contained in **Appendix H** (many of these are also included under ‘More information’ throughout the CQSS2030 website).

## 7 – Independent CQSS targets review

In 2021, Fitzroy Basin Association contracted Eberhard Consulting to undertake an independent review of draft 2021 CQSS2030 targets. The review process was a rapid desktop exercise that considered and made recommendations about the draft 2021 targets. The initial review of draft targets assessed each draft target against SMART criteria, and considered critical linkages to higher level documents. Recommendations were made to keep, modify, replace, discard or add draft targets for further consideration by Fitzroy Basin Association and a broader technical expert panel.

**Appendix I** contains excerpts from the review, recommended targets and a list of key linkages. Requests for a full copy of the report can be made to [Fitzroy Basin Association](https://www.fba.org.au/contact-us/).

## 8 – Recommendations from the 2018-21 CQSS 2030 review

The health of our environment undoubtedly underpins our region’s economic, social and cultural wellbeing. The decisions and actions we take today and over the coming 10 years will determine how well our environment can support us and generations to come. We all want and need the same things; nutritious food, clean air and water, good health, happy families, secure jobs and strong communities.

We are in an enviable position geographically and historically. Our communities and landscapes have proven their resilience. Should we wish to, we have access to generations’ worth of knowledge, skills and science, as well as cutting-edge technology from around the globe, and the most data ever. While we are not without differences of opinion, historical and economic challenges, our region is mature enough to have hard conversations, make hard decisions and take critical action. We also know it will take all of us working together to find the best path and ensure we create a future worth having.

The critical next steps towards implementing and achieving a sustainable future for Central Queensland bring together the recommendations and requests received during the 2020-21 review of the CQSS2030 – a combination of over 1200 community responses to the 2020 natural assets survey, input from more than 34 technical specialists, recommendations from several of our region’s First Nations groups, and what national and world scientists are calling for.

By implementing the critical next steps together, we can ensure CQSS2030 does not become just another strategy. Rather, we ensure that in 2030 we all look back proud that we took bold and well-informed action. That together, we ensured the future of our region for ourselves, our grandchildren’s children, and well beyond.

## Critical next steps

By October 2022 establish eight regional working groups (outlined overleaf) who:

* 1. further the reach and influence of CQSS2030
  2. establish monitoring and reporting against all CQSS2030 targets
  3. ensure the CQSS2030 is informed by and implemented with cross-sector and cross-cultural approaches that combine industry best practice, world-leading science, the wisdom of First Nations’ knowledge and the input of our regional, State, Australian and global citizens.

## The working groups

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Working Group (WG)** | **Foundational objectives** | **Outputs by June 2023** | **Key partners** | **Working group establishment coordinator** |
| Health and wellbeing | - determine and promote best business management practices by business type  - determine metrics and baseline for regional health and wellbeing targets  - contextualise and communicate projected weather changes and mitigation through trusted pathways | M&R framework for CQSS big picture targets  ??something about regional readiness for climate change strategy? | First Nations WG  All 6 natural asset WG  Queensland Health  Regional development corporations  Regional councils  Universities | FBA Regional Engagement Coordinator |
| First Nations | - Enable and support First Nation partnerships and traditional alliances to participate in the WG  - co-design culturally appropriate processes and systems for the identification, management, monitoring & reporting of the health of culturally significant species and sites within the region  - review and inform objectives/outputs of 6 natural assets groups  - Development of a draft ‘Regional First Nations state of our Country monitoring and reporting plan.’  - advocate for and resource the implementation of the regional plan by First Nations | FPIC process undertaken with 16 First Nations  Resourcing identified to support participation of representatives of 16 First Nations in WG  Development and endorsement of WG Terms of Reference  Workshops to co-design frameworks and develop regional plan  Draft Regional First Nations state of our country monitoring and reporting plan  Review of 6 natural assets working group outputs | Health and wellbeing WG  First Nations peoples | FBA Indigenous Engagement Coordinator |
| Air – technical/science panel\* | - increase regional greenspace and decrease airborne pollutants  - identify and secure access to appropriate health statistics to report against relevant CQSS targets  - identify and secure access to data sets that map region’s air quality  - identify and establish priority air monitoring sites across region | Access to health indicator data  M&R framework for CQSS air targets  Monitoring and reporting stations across region | Health and wellbeing WG  Soil WG  Terrestrial WG  Regional councils  Mining, energy and transport industry  NPI | ?GHHP Executive Officer |
| Soil – technical/science panel\* | - determine best management practices by land/soil type and landuse (incl. end of dry season recommended biomass, indicators and standards for soil health)  - identify and secure access to data sets that map region’s active/next erosion, salinity/problem sites and healthy/high value soils | Soil BMP standards  Collated map  M&R framework for CQSS soil targets | Air WG  Terrestrial WG  Agricultural and mining industry  Fire ecologists | FBA NRM Team leader |
| Landbased – technical/science panel\* | - determine keystone species, metrics to categorise valuable vegetation in landscape (for habitat and services), criteria of critical refugia and connectivity of value, indicators and standards for system health (including connectivity, diversity, integrity, function and viable species populations)  - identify and secure access to data that maps/informs the above | Metrics and criteria  Collated map  M&R framework for CQSS landbased targets (interim 2023-27, ideal 2027 and beyond) | Groundwater WG  Freshwater WG  Soil WG  First Nations WG  Regional councils  QPWS  Fire ecologists | FBA Environment Team Leader |
| Freshwater – technical/science panel\* | - determine keystone species, metrics to categorise valuable waterways (for habitat and services), criteria of critical refugia and connectivity of value, indicators and standards for system health (including connectivity, diversity, integrity, regime, function and viable species populations)  - identify and secure access to data that maps/informs the above | Metrics and criteria  Collated map  M&R framework for CQSS freshwater targets | Groundwater WG  Coastal & marine WG  Terrestrial WG  First Nations WG  Sunwater & ??  DES | FBA Strategic Projects Leader/FPRH Exec Officer |
| Groundwater – technical/science panel\* | - determine custom indicators and standards for priority aquifers (incl levels, pressures, water quality)  - determine indicators and standards for groundwater-dependent ecosystem health  - identify and secure access to data that maps/informs the above  - identify and establish priority groundwater monitoring sites across region | Metrics and criteria  Collated map  M&R framework for CQSS groundwater targets  Monitoring and reporting stations across region | Terrestrial WG  Freshwater WG  Coastal & marine WG  Mining and agricultural industry  First Nations | FBA Community Participation Coordinator |
| Coastal & marine – technical/science panel\* | - determine keystone species, metrics to categorise valuable seagrass, mangroves, rookeries, roosting sites and corals (for habitat and services), criteria of critical refugia and connectivity of value, indicators and standards for system health (including connectivity, diversity, integrity, resilience, function and viable species populations)  - identify and secure access to data that maps/informs the above | Metrics and criteria  Collated map  M&R framework for CQSS coastal and marine targets | Freshwater WG  Terrestrial WG  Groundwater WG  First Nations WG  GBRMPA  Marine Parks  Coastal regional councils | FBA Partnerships Manager |

## Working group membership, operation and remuneration

Participation in any of the groups is voluntary. All participants commit to collaborative participation for the purposes outlined within this document. Working group membership requires that members bring connections, data and/or other resources that make a significant contribution to achieving group objectives and outputs. Dedicated funding is not currently available for participation in any of the working groups.

Technical/Science panel invitations will initially be sent to those who were invited to participate in the 2021 technical specialist CQSS2030 workshop, and to First Nations groups of the region. First Nations’ representatives with specialist knowledge in particular technical/science panel working groups are strongly encouraged to participate as members of these groups.

All groups will be responsible for further inviting relevant specialists and representatives to join/engage with the groups, and establishing and managing the working protocols, expectations, and timeframes of each group. This includes securing necessary funding and resources to conduct meetings, operate and deliver against foundational objectives and June 2023 outputs.

An introductory establishment meeting for all working groups is proposed for February 2022.

## The role of Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA)

As the leading natural resource management (NRM) body for the region, FBA is responsible for coordinating the review and ongoing maintenance of the region’s NRM plan – the CQSS2030. This includes making the CQSS2030 publicly available and accessible. FBA also plays a pivotal role in supporting the region’s community, industry and government entities to work together to implement more sustainable practices across the region. For this reason, FBA commits to initiating invitations and conversations to facilitate the initial set up of the recommended working groups, and remaining an active participant within each group.

## For further information

To express your interest in participating in one or more of the working groups, or to find out more contact:

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