

A sunset scene with a bright sun low on the horizon, casting a warm orange glow over a body of water. Silhouettes of trees are visible in the foreground and middle ground.

# ANNUAL REPORT

2022 / 2023



# SUNSHINE COAST ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL

*SCEC is the peak environmental advocacy organisation on the Sunshine Coast.  
Established in 1980, SCEC represents 51 community groups working in the areas of natural resource management,  
conservation, environmental restoration and protection and sustainability.*

## Acknowledgement of Country

The Sunshine Coast Environment Council (SCEC) acknowledges that we live, work, learn and create on the land of the Kabi Kabi and Jinibara people and would like to recognise the strength, resilience and capacity of Australia's First Nations People. We recognise that these have always been places of cultural, spiritual, social and economic significance. The Traditional Custodians' unique values, and ancient and enduring cultures, deepen and enrich the life of our community and environment. We wish to pay respect to their Elders – past, present and emerging, and acknowledge the important role First Nations people continue to play within the Sunshine Coast community. Sovereignty has never been ceded. It always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

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## Our Vision

An ecologically sustainable world achieved through individual and community stewardship of the natural environment at local, regional and global levels.

## Our Mission

Through leadership, education and environmental activism, to encourage Sunshine Coast individuals and communities to support and participate in working towards the goal of environmental sustainability.





# PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

*Derek Foster*

I would like to begin this report by acknowledging the traditional human custodians of this land upon which I write this report, the Gubbi Gubbi people. I wish to acknowledge the knowledge and wisdom of Elders past, present, and emerging. In the same way I would also acknowledge the Yugerra people, human custodians of the land upon which I grew up and the elders in my extended family group who have overseen the land of Glen Brea, my family farm, and the wisdom they have imparted as a guide to my evolution as an environmentalist. Finally I would like to acknowledge the members of SCEC without whom endeavours to save the coast's biodiversity would not happen.

In this report I would like to take time to go over some of the achievements of the Sunshine Coast Environment Council (SCEC) over the past three terms I have served as President. I began my role by accepting the nomination as President on the 21st of November, 2020. At that time I felt there was a need to stabilise the operations of SCEC, as the only continuing members of the Management Committee were Sue Etheridge, our wonderful Treasurer and Jillian Rossiter, our wise muse that we still call on to this day for her wisdom and guidance.

There are two levels of work that I need to identify, the work done by our staff and the work done by the Management Committee. Our staff have supplied their reports for you to peruse at your leisure. You will notice that SCEC has played a very reactive role, certainly for the past five years or so, and has responded to the continually emerging threats to our natural bio systems on the Sunshine Coast. The major sources of these threats have been the environmental destruction caused by the increasing urban development pressures. It is a known threat that there has been, and continues to be, loss of biodiversity (animals and plants) within the perimeter of SCEC's coverage area. Some of the key aspects of this lie in issues such as light impact on beaches that are know nesting grounds for our marine turtles, loss of koala habitat to housing, industrial, and road developments, inappropriate floodplain impacts, loss of water quality in both estuarine and marine waters, the contribution to plastics pollution, and of course our contribution to the ill-health of our atmosphere and the resultant changes in climate.



As the 'peak' environmental body on the Sunshine Coast we have a responsibility to engage with these issues. I have pondered on what the term 'peak' really means. The essence of that word, as far as I can determine, means we are here, not solve all of the issues, but rather to support the efforts of all those people on the Sunshine Coast who are striving to restore the damage already been done to nature and protect the Sunshine Coast from further damage and loss of biodiversity. SCEC is a small organisation with a team of passionate volunteers that make up the Management Committee, two paid staff and a car. But what we do have is an extensive array of community organisations and individuals who are members of SCEC. In fact I would like to suggest that it is you, our member groups, who are SCEC. It is our combined effort that can restore and protect nature within the Sunshine Coast.

Reactive we have been, and some of our efforts have been successful and, unfortunately, some have not. If we look at some of the big campaigns that are focussed on protection, such as the developments at Yaroomba, Coolum West, Twin Waters West, and at Bli Bli. What we are faced with is disproportionate financial power. Large development corporations, often international conglomerates, have the financial capacity to employ consultants, produce fabulously attractive reports and plans, and fight court cases with expensive and high profile lawyers.

These organisations are fighting for very large profits. This is juxtaposed against small community organisations that have limited funds and are fighting for social and environmental justice. They are not driven by capitalist greed but driven by altruistic aspirations for their villages and creating a balanced human/nature interface as a legacy for generations that follow. So SCEC's role is to assist, wherever possible, organisations and individuals who are dealing with emergent challenges, and ensure environmental justice is achieved.

Of course there have been some wins. Ferny Forest, the Traveston Dam, and in some cases some deferment of and adjustments to development proposals are some examples. There are also some great programs such as Barung Landcare's Gardens for Wildlife and the Backyards for Biodiversity programs run by wonderful and energetic members trying to increase biodiversity, the Ten Little Pieces program combating plastic pollution, and many more great programs, small and large that are run by people with a passion for our planet.

This reactive role is important but it will just continue ad nauseum if proactive strategies and actions are not put in place to counter the continuous insurgence of threats. This is an area of work that SCEC needs to address more vigorously in the future. We need to be more assertive in our contribution to the development of and demands for adherence to such things as local and regional strategic plans for population growth, and environmental protection of natural systems.

This proactive role holds the key to ensuring justice is achieved for nature that shares our space here on the Sunshine Coast. We need to celebrate such things as the Blue Heart initiative, be proactive in seeing that the Sunshine Coast Biosphere is driven by the people of the Coast and is not just a tool for gaining competitive advantage in the tourism market.



We need to ensure we change what is necessary to change to stop the drastic decline in biodiversity. Both the reactive and the proactive aspects of SCEC's activities are addressed by SCEC staff, but they cannot do by themselves what will be needed in the future. This is where they need your help. SCEC needs increased numbers of volunteers. I know there are passionate young people in our population who are driven to do what they can to save our biodiversity. Sir David Attenborough is turning his most recent video work towards highlighting the potential for the sixth mass extinction. I want to stop this from happening, and I am sure many others do as well. SCEC creates the opportunity for many people to be part of the processes that will be needed to do this. Volunteer now if you can.

The second area of work that I want to talk about is the work of the Management Committee (MC). Not only is the MC a necessary legal requirement for our organisation, it is, or should be, the group that ensures good governance within the organisation and gives the organisation its strategic direction. It is in this area of work that I have concentrated my efforts over the past three terms as President. During my stint as President we have come a long way in setting things up for SCEC to move ahead into the new world of the Sunshine Coast that is emerging under the forces emanating from the local Sunshine Coast Regional Council's (SCRC) business driven philosophy and the State Government's Regional Planning initiatives. During the three years I have had the pleasure of working with some wonderful people on the MCs. As a tribute to their efforts I list all of these people here.

Members of the management committee during my time as President -

2020/2021 committee -

- Michael Kane - Vice President
- Sue Etheridge - Treasurer
- Peter Hogg - Secretary
- David Robertson - committee member
- Benjamin Child - committee member
- Jillian Rossiter - committee member
- Jason Rao Sellaiah - committee member

2021/2022 committee -

- Benjamin Child - Vice President
- Sue Etheridge - Treasurer
- Peter Hogg - Secretary
- Jillian Rossiter - committee member
- Kelly Matthews - committee member
- Andrew Picone - committee member

2022/2023 committee -

- Benjamin Child - Vice President - till Oct 2022
- Natalie Frost - Vice President - from Nov 2022
- Sue Etheridge - Treasurer
- Joanne Kohnke - Secretary
- Kelly Matthews - committee member
- Elaine Ricketts - committee member - till Dec 2022
- Alison Rickert - committee member
- Ken Cross - committee member - from April 2022



During this period I have had the support of people who have been respectful, compassionate, hardworking, and committed to the mission of SCEC. These people have together given SCEC a more contemporary profile and have developed new dimensions to the rigour of governance and direction of the organisation.

When I first accepted the role of President I very clearly articulated my philosophy of multiple points of leadership within the organisation. This meant that where somebody had expertise and passion for a particular area of work, leadership was devolved to them. MC members throughout the past three years have been willing to undertake leadership roles and thus the MC has been an active and direction setting component of the organisation. Throughout this work MC leaders engaged with members and member groups, our colleagues in other organisations and utilised best practice to achieve the goals they set. Their achievements have set new standards of operational governance and the resolution of a number of key issues within the organisation that have been lingering for some time.

During 2020 I, in association with the then Vice President, Michael Kane, initiated a review process that was targeted at unearthing any key issues that had not been raised at that time. This process was participative in nature and consisted of document reviews, discussions and interviews with staff, and review discussions within the MC.

Out of this work a Strategic Directions discussion paper was developed and it contained a new blueprint for the operating structure of SCEC and identified some key areas of work for the MC. This blue print helped clarify the purpose of SCEC and therefore helped realign the focus of work for staff. The purpose had been a little confused but the paper identified that purpose of SCEC is focussed on the natural environment. Because the intersection of the state of the environment and human activities can be confusing in terms of where does one put their efforts, this clarity has led to greater effort in addressing issues pertaining to the natural world.

It has seen a decrease in SCEC's effort focussed on the state of the built environment of the human world. Of course there is overlap and a recognition that it is only human activity (well mostly as there is no real other threats in this geomorphologically stable part of the planet) that is destroying the natural systems that support the biodiversity of the area. SCEC now operates with in a number of 'portfolios'. The two portfolios associated with external outreach activities are 'Protection' and 'Restoration' (of nature).

Faced with the Covid19 pandemic, the future of World Environment Day (WED) was questioned. This was resolved in the first instance (2020) with an innovative response which saw SCEC collaborate with UniSC to have an online event. The next couple of WED events were designed to have the WED festival day spread over a month and have member groups provide activities in their specific locations. This has been a major innovation and is seen by some as they way forward, as it embraces the concept of member group empowerment and member group engagement with the public. It was hoped this would increase membership for groups and raise awareness of the array of issues facing the coast.



As part of the Strategic Directions paper it was identified the SCEC office was in need of refurbishment and redesign. It also raised the question of the role of the office. In response to these findings, SCEC has been fortunate to be able to acquire new premises. We now situated in a shopfront office in Howard Street, Nambour and the design of the office is nearing completion. As with any service centre, the office will be continually under redesign and adjustment as its purpose and role continues to change to service the needs of members and the broader community.

Another outcome from the Strategic Directions paper was the adjustment of our staffing structure. In 2022 Natalie Frost was appointed a wonderful new role at the Queensland Conservation Council heading up a project addressing land clearing in Queensland. Their gain, our loss. And at around the same time our long time receptionist and finance officer Debbie Hoye retired. This provided an opportunity to review the staffing structure and it was decided to appoint an Operations Manager. Ben Child was successful in being appointed and he has managed with great precision the transition of operations to the new office. He has established, in collaboration with Sue Etheridge, new financial systems, and is completing strategy papers for funding options and volunteer recruitment. He will shortly realign his efforts to support outreach and education programs.

Natalie Frost, applied for funding to undertake a strategic planning exercise for the organisation to be undertaken by an external body. This was approved in May 2022 and is nearing completion. There is now a Strategic Blue print for the organisation's future. The blue print gives great clarity as to the vision, and mission and identifies five 'pillars' upon which SCECs future work rests.

#### **Our strategic pillars of work**

- We represent, support and connect local organisations in acting to protect and restore the natural environment.
- We lead informed advocacy for the protection and restoration of the natural environment.
- We educate the broader community about the values of a thriving natural environment on the Sunshine Coast.
- We ensure we are a sustainable organisation that will exist far into the future.





The Strategic Plan further develops how these pillars may identify aspired outcomes and give a framework into which we can put our existing work as part of the operational plan. It also has provided an opportunity to identify some gaps in our work which we can now review and fill. It also identifies some work that we are doing that maybe we can drop to make way for more important priorities. The detail of these operations will become apparent as the Operational Plan is developed.

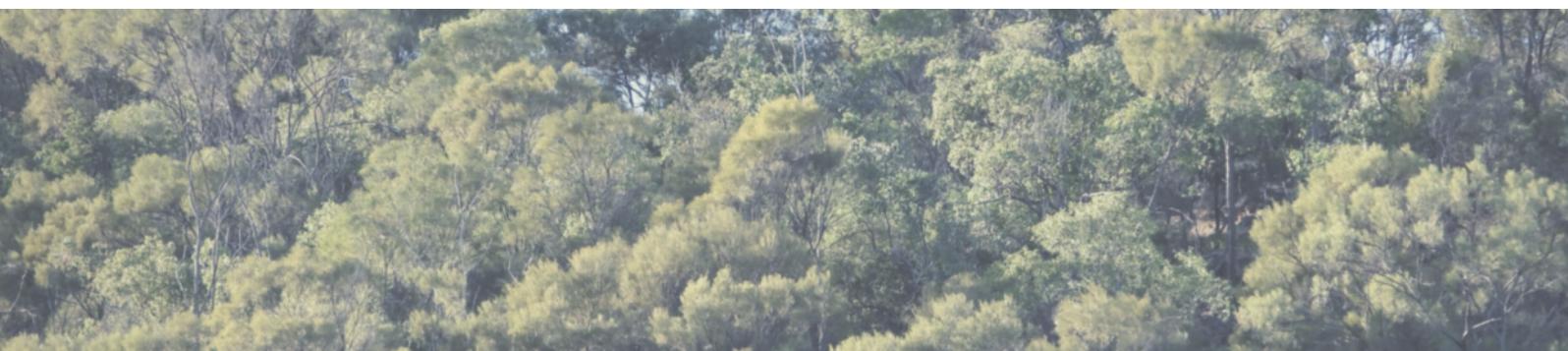
I feel that my three terms in office have been a very productive and progressive. I leave SCEC with a Strategic Plan in place, a new office and a revitalised governance infrastructure. I would remind everyone this is the start of the future. This future will be defined by adherence to the Strategic and Operational Plans, the innovations that will be created to keep SCEC up to date with the changing world of the Sunshine Coast, and with a unified MC and Staff commitment to managing the changes ahead. Being an experienced change management professional in a past life I know that for some, change is a challenging concept and, as seen as the driver of those changes, I may not have been the most liked person at times over the three years. This is normal and expected, and I am content with work I have done because I believe in the importance of the role that SCEC has to play to keep nature on the Sunshine Coast as safe and sustainable as possible. To the many in the organisation that have supported the process and have worked hard to get us to where we are, I sincerely thank you for your respect support, hard work, understanding, and passionate belief in what SCEC can achieve in the future.

Due to new areas of work that I am going to be undertaking in the future, I have decided that it is time for me to move on and not nominate for a position on the MC. I sincerely believe that SCEC can be a force to give nature a helping hand to survive on the Sunshine Coast and I hope there are many volunteers that will join SCEC to achieve such an outcome.

Lastly I would like to celebrate the hard work done by volunteers in community organisations throughout the Coast who work tirelessly to create a better future for the generations ahead. I would like to suggest to those groups and individuals that SCEC is your organisation. I would to encourage you to ensure SCEC is working for you and your causes. Tell SCEC what you need from it and give it strong direction into the future.

Warm Regards,

Derek Foster, President - 2020-2023





# PEOPLE & GOVERNANCE

*We worked together to foster a sense of hope and ambition for the years to come whilst setting the strategic directions needed to carry our work forward*

It certainly has been a changing year for SCEC.

I started the year being renominated as Vice President and come November 2022 I begun in the newly created Operations and Finance Manager role. I have over 20 years experience in community develop, fundraising and business management. I saw the opportunity with the role in SCEC as a chance to enhance and continue building SCEC's legacy.

It all started with Natalie Frost, SCEC's amazing Coordinator finished up in August of 2022 and moved into a role with Queensland Conservation Council, and deservedly so, she is now fully immersed in the battle for QLD's deforestation. However, a slight twist, what SCEC lost in our Coordinator we gained as our Vice President of the Management Committee (MC).

On behalf of SCEC, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Natalie for all her work, effort, passion, dedication and most importantly her willingness to keep going - thank you Natalie and we wish you all the best moving forward - don't forget about us!

On farewells, our awesome Admin and Finance Office Debra Hoye, retired in December 2022. Debra had been with SCEC for many years firstly as a volunteer and then transitioning to being a paid staff member. Debra's hard working ethic, knowledge and experience allowed SCEC to focus on the important topics and issues. Thank you Deb for all your work, enjoy retirement, very well deserved!!

I would personally like to thank our MC for the past year - Derek Foster President, Natalie Frost Vice President, Sue Etheridge Treasurer, Joanne Kohnke Secretary, Kelly Matthews Committee Member, Alison Rickert Committee Member, Elaine Ricketts Committee Member and Ken Cross Committee Member. The commitment and drive you provided SCEC was invaluable in particular getting the Strategic Plan in motion - thank you for your support and all the best moving forward.

I am very fortunate to work with Narelle McCarthy at SCEC. Narelle adds skills, experience, motivation, dedication and passion for all things Sunshine Coast environment. Narelle is extremely driven in the pursuit of the best environmental outcomes for the Sunshine Coast region - SCEC thanks you for all that do!!

Ben Child  
Operations Manager



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## 2022/2023 Management Committee



**Derek Foster**  
President



**Ben Child**  
Vice-President  
Aug 22 - Oct 2022



**Joanne Kohnke**  
Secretary



**Sue Etheridge**  
Treasurer



**Alison Rickert**  
Member



**Kelly Matthews**  
Member



**Elaine Ricketts**  
Member  
Aug 22 - Dec 2022



**Ken Cross**  
Member  
From April 2022

## Staff



**Coordinator**  
Natalie Frost  
November 2018 -  
September 2022



**Liaison and  
Advocacy Officer**  
Narelle McCarthy



**Administration  
Assistant**  
Debra Hoyo  
Retired December  
2022



**Operations &  
Finance Manager**  
Benjamin Child  
Started November  
2022



## Volunteers

SCEC is fortunate to have fantastic people from the community that volunteer and assist in the operational elements of the office and the various events, campaigns and projects delivered throughout the year.

Whilst we continue to feel the effect of the pandemic and the challenges to scheduling continued, we welcomed some wonderful new faces to the office in 2022.

During this time, SCEC has also had some amazing volunteers that have assisted in areas such as -

- Creation of a Containers for Change Program
- Creation of a Community Fundraising Program
- Office Administration
- Generation of a business contact lists

I would like to thank the following volunteers -

- Lily Munro
- Linzi Lithgow
- Joanne Kohnke
- Helen Garsden
- Kai Walker
- Bruna Miranda
- Olivia Finlayson





# PROTECTION & POLICY

Well what a year! Already! While there was a lingering spectre of Covid-19 still affecting our work and capacity in some way at times, there has still been an incredible amount of activity and impact as your peak environmental advocacy group and Regional Conservation Council for the Greater Sunshine Coast region.

We progressed our umbrella Floodplains to Forests project, remained deeply involved in ongoing major and contentious development proposals such as Sekisui Yaroomba, Twin Waters West and Coolum West and a myriad of other development related issues across multiple local government areas and jurisdictions.

SCEC kept up its historical campaign around state forests related to the *1999 SEQ Forest Agreement* by playing a key role in seeing some of our state forests transition without a 'final cut' into Protected Area Estate before the end of 2024.

An Independent Environmental Protection Agency for Queensland, major infrastructure and renewable energy projects, substantive submissions on draft legislation, strategies, policies and plans were also in a busy mix over the past 12 months. As were many other things!

## Protecting Our Floodplains to Forests

**Floodplains to Forests** is an overarching project and umbrella for multiple campaigns and initiatives for which we have received some welcome grant seed funding from the Tides Foundation (Patagonia). Objectives cover the protection and restoration of the regionally significant Maroochy River floodplain and to progress the *Habitat 2022-2032* report, a contemporary version of SCEC's innovative Habitat 2000 Wildlife Corridors Report as a central output of the overall project.

*Habitat 2022-2032* will highlight the values of the Sunshine Coast's diverse ecosystems, wildlife corridors and to foster community stewardship initiatives for our waterways, wetlands and forests. It is also designed to capture and communicate the status and conservation values of the region's biodiversity, wildlife corridors and core and connecting habitat to support advocacy and community actions to secure these critical corridors and conservation areas from the coastal lowlands to the hinterlands. Sincere thanks to the very skilled and outstanding UniSC Intern, Kai Walker, for their invaluable contribution to this project.

We know increasing urbanisation, largely driven by unrelenting population growth, brings increasing and compounding pressures on our precious native wildlife and their habitats. Here on the Sunshine Coast, the landscape from our floodplains to our forests has been heavily fragmented pushing wildlife into fast diminishing habitat. It's critical the hard-fought for National Parks, State Forests and conservation areas are connected to remaining bushland, wetlands, waterways and core habitat areas to provide corridors for wildlife to move through, over, under and across areas of viable habitat safely to forage, breed and to live their wild life!



Compounded by the impacts of climate change, fauna need functional and extensive corridors to support their survival and to help address the alarming extinction trajectory of too many species, including the iconic but endangered koala which sadly and unacceptably continues Australia's appalling track-record for conservation of our unique flora and fauna and natural heritage.

We all understand and work to do all possible to turn this unacceptable state of the environment around. Better environmental outcomes from infrastructure projects and land-use planning by identifying and protecting, connecting and and restoring twildlife corridors before we lose any more opportunities for connectivity is a key focus.

That's why, back in 1999-2000, SCEC produced The Habitat 2000 Wildlife Corridors Report - an innovative and cutting-edge project to identify priority wildlife corridors initially in the Caloundra City Council area. This underpinning work and resulting document was instrumental in determining which areas contained high conservation and habitat values and formed critical corridors in an effort to enhance and preserve them in the face of rampant development and escalating development and urbanisation pressures.

While we can fortunately say this leading-edge work informed and help secure areas for conservation over the past two decades, the relevance of this work remains as we continue to see where corridors have been established and opportunities to secure links to conservation areas before they are lost. This data and information will continue to underpin our evidence-based advocacy, particularly in relation to the SEQ Regional Plan 2023 update and the new Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme.

We look forward to collaborating with you to progress and promote this key project with its many facets and impacts.

## **SCEC Legacy Projects**

A number of SCEC's 'Legacy Projects' come under the Floodplains to Forests umbrella. These include:

### **Lot 480**

A 40 year campaign to secure conservation tenure for Lot 480, a 226ha parcel of undeveloped, unallocated crown land (USL) situated between the 450ha Environmental Protection Zone of Caloundra South and open space land adjacent to Pelican Waters.

- The site is the remnant of the Bells creek Critical Nature Conservation Area that was severely impacted by development of Pelican Waters development Lot 480 lies strategically between the large developments of Pelican Waters and Caloundra South (it adjoins the Environmental Protection Zone within the Caloundra South PDA and would provide a contiguous ecological corridor)
- The Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland (Sunshine Coast & Hinterland Branch) and SCEC have been advocating for its' gazettel as National Park as far back as the 1970's. Successive state governments have recognised the ecological values of the land and supported its nomination to go into Protected Estate, however, it still hasn't happened! Yet..
- As one of the few parcels of remnant coastal vegetation remaining (particularly of this size) it is critical for biodiversity, climate, flood mitigation, green space and amenity. Continued and intensive urban expansion on the Sunshine Coast (particularly in the southern part of the region) makes its protection vital.
- This campaign has been elevated in recent times and there is encouraging support from Sunshine Coast Council and the relevant state agencies, so we'll keep this momentum going to finally secure its long -term protection and appropriate management



## Palmview Urban Investigation Areas

Securing conservation tenure for the Palmview Urban Investigation Area parcels (approx 200ha) adjoining the Mooloolah River NP and Lower Mooloolah River Environment Reserve currently vulnerable to a potential planning scheme amendment for urban expansion of Palmview ('Harmony')

## The Regional Inter-Urban Break

Often referred to as the gateway to the Sunshine Coast, the Regional Inter-urban Break encompasses 6300ha and separates the Sunshine Coast region from the Greater Brisbane area. This important and irreplaceable green space extends from the hinterland and rural areas surrounding the iconic Glass House Mountains in the west to the stunning internationally recognised RAMSAR-listed Pumicestone Passage and coastline in the east. It contributes significantly to the region's natural environment and unique landscapes, which are the foundations of the Sunshine Coast way of life. It also has significant cultural heritage values and First Nations identity.

Avoiding the creation of new urban development areas in major regional green spaces such as the Regional Inter-urban Break is essential to ensure these important spaces are not reduced over time, large areas meet the recreational needs of a growing population and significant environments are protected in perpetuity in recognition of their value and contribution to the region's identity and liveability. This includes the Potential Future Growth Area (PFGA) known as Halls Creek in the current SEQ Regional Plan/ShapingSEQ (and in the just released SEQRP 2023 'Update') which Stockland is pushing as 'Aura South.'

SCEC joined with a number of community groups to form the Protect Our Regional Inter-Urban Break Alliance (yes...PORIUBA)

PORIUBA is an alliance of community organisations whose aim is to have statutory protection of the full extent and outstanding values of the Sunshine Coast's Regional Inter-Urban Break. Currently, the Alliance is comprised of Take Action for Pumicestone Passage (TAPP), Caloundra Residents Association (CRA), Caloundra Liveability Alliance (CSA), Wildlife Preservation Society-Sunshine Coast & Hinterland Branch (WPSQ), the Organisation Sunshine Coast Association of Residents (OSCAR) and the Sunshine Coast Environment Council (SCEC). This Alliance collectively represents some 15,000 members and a wider community of supporters and allies, including the Sunshine Coast Council.





## Twin Waters West Ebbed and Flowed through the Court

And we won!

On 15 September 2022, Judge William Everson upheld the Sunshine Coast Regional Council's decision of 23 July 2020 to refuse Stockland's development application for a intensive urban development with a pumped saltwater lake in dismissing Stockland's appeal. SCEC was one of several Co-Respondents with Council in this matter.

His Honour cited in his judgment that allowing the development in its current form risked the "real prospect of detriment and destruction" of a nearby wetland."

Unfortunately, given the contentious *Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme 2014* amendment rezoning this 104ha parcel on the Maroochy River Floodplain from Rural to Emerging Community Zone Stockland have now submitted a new (and it's third) development application (MCU 23/0113). This next move is unfortunately not unexpected but remains a concern . We're looking at this application closely and working with our fellow co-respondent community groups ahead of the public notification period.

## Coolum West fades into the sunset

Of all the inappropriate development proposals we had on the go, the 'Coolum West Surf Ranch' and urban development proposal on a 510ha parcel within the regionally significant Maroochy River floodplain was one that stayed persistently on our radar.

Our ongoing advocacy as part of our joint campaign with five other community groups dubbed the 'Community 6' (Organisation Sunshine Coast Association of Residents, Surfrider Sunshine Coast, Friends of Yaroomba, Development Watch, Coolum Residents Association and SCEC) was rewarded in February with some welcome news. A short but long-awaited letter advised "*The Queensland Government understands this development is no longer being pursued. If you require further information about the proposed development, I suggest you contact the proponent Consolidated Properties Group.*" Finally!

While we need to remain vigilant that this proposal never resurfaces (as we must do for all campaign 'wins'), this was a major win for the community and our important floodplains. It also presents an opportunity to expand the Blue Heart, an innovative and world leading blue carbon project providing multiple, long term benefits including flood mitigation, , habitat and wetland restoration, recreation and jobs in nature based tourism by 510ha!



## Still the wrong way Sekisui...

Since the last report where we celebrated the milestone Supreme Court win where Her Honour Nicole Kefford DCJ was found to have erred in her 2020 judgment in dismissing Development Watch and SCEC's 2018 Planning & Environment Court (P&E) appeals, we've been back to the P&E Court on behalf of the community for a remitted hearing in August 2022.

We were again extremely disappointed to have our appeals (DW as the First Appellant and SCEC as the Second Appellant) dismissed by yes, the same Judge in June this year. Following legal advice, Development Watch is taking our collective fight back to the Court of Appeal (Supreme Court).

We sincerely thank the community for their unwavering support, spirit and resilience. We all know the environment, the wildlife and the marine turtles, the community and amenity of the beautiful Yaroomba are at stake. For these reasons and more, we all haven't and won't give up until, together, we have 'Saved Yaroomba!'

## Stronger Environment Laws closer but not closed

Much of the shocking decline of biodiversity, the growing list of threatened species and the climate emergency stems from weak and ineffective environment laws. SCEC continued its involvement with the Places You Love Alliance (an alliance of more than 60 organisations, representing over 1.5 million Australians) for the reform of our Federal environment law, the EPBC Act. Australia's environmental laws are being rewritten for the first time in over 20 years. This is critical opportunity to ensure that the Government doesn't lock in any more business as usual.

These laws are outdated, barely monitored and rarely enforced, leaving loopholes for the ongoing destruction of nature. We're joining and supporting actions calling on the Government for stronger national environmental laws, that:

- Enact strong and enforced National Environmental Standards that safeguard nature against further destruction.
- Properly fund habitat restoration and species recovery.
- Create an independent Environment Protection Australia (EPA) that will monitor and enforce these laws.

Close legal loopholes that favour big businesses over nature.





### Ferny Forest

The Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF)’s plan to log Ferny Forest (a 130ha parcel of Beerwah State Forest) was strenuously opposed by SCEC, Save Ferny Forest and the wider community. Ferny Forest is located on Gubbi Gubbi / Kabi Kabi country and includes popular mountain biking and walking tracks, homes for wildlife including the koala and other threatened species.

After many months of campaigning by SCEC, QCC and the Save Ferny Forest community group, Ferny Forest was taken off the timber harvesting schedule, and will be transitioned into the conservation estate by the end of 2024.

There are large areas of high conservation value state forest in the South East Queensland planning region, but more than 40,000 ha of this precious habitat is still on logging schedules. Deongwar, Yabba, Benarkin, Squirrel Creek – each of these forests are full of hollow bearing trees and invaluable for wildlife. SCEC continues to work with the broader community and QCC to protect state forests in the broader Sunshine Coast region.

So while there's more to be done, we are incrementally and necessarily growing our Protected Area estate within our region and surrounds





## Queensland Environment Roundtable (QERT) and Ministerial Roundtable (MERT)

The Roundtables are always an important time to elevate our regional issues and opportunities as part of a bigger platform with the Queensland Environment Minister, the Department of Environment and Science and other agencies. Canvassing issues across topics such as Reef & Water, Coal & Gas, Climate Change, Protected Areas and Threatened Species highlights actions that need to be taken and improvements made.

Catching up with our fellow regional Conservation Council and sector colleagues is always empowering and reminds of the collective impact we have as part of Queensland's strong environment movement and conservation sector. The events in Brisbane earlier this year were jam-packed and productive as always as we collectively lifted up issues around biodiversity, protected areas, climate and energy, reef and water. And more! We're looking forward to the MERT and QERT being held right here on the Sunny Coast later this month and having you're invaluable involvement.

Throughout the year, we provided submissions and feedback on 18 topics including the State Koala Regulations 2020 Post-Implementation Review, Independent Qld EPA, Draft Great Sandy Marine Park Rezoning Plan, Council management plans and policies, Federal EPBC referrals and more. We also had representation on 7 stakeholder reference groups and identified as a key environment stakeholder for briefings and input on infrastructure projects, research, policy and more.

### Stakeholder Representation

- Sunshine Coast Biosphere Reserve Community Reference Group (CRG) & Community Advisory Group (CAG) Designation implementation phase:
- SCRC Community Transport Reference Group
- Dulong & Image Flat quarries working group
- MRCCC: Upper Mary Environment delegate
- Sunshine Coast Public Transport CRG
- SCRC Invasive Weeds Taskforce
- Borumba Pumped Hydro Energy Scheme
- Member organisation of the SEQ Community Alliance

### Board positions

- SEQ Catchments Members Association (SEQCMA) Deputy-Chair
- Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) - Queensland Councillor

Once again, it's impossible to capture and highlight everything that has been going on, what we've been working on and involved in at local, state and national levels in this report! The fantastic support of our members, the dedication and expertise of my wonderful colleagues Natalie Frost, Ben Child and Debbie Hoye who I wish well in her well-deserved retirement is deeply appreciated. My thanks to our invaluable volunteers and of course, the Management Committee. This depth of dedication and passion combined with such a breadth of expertise continues to ensure SCEC is well positioned to continue to effect and generate positive change and outcomes for nature and climate.

With sincere thanks and appreciation for all that you do.

Narelle McCarthy  
Liaison and Advocacy





# RESTORATION

## Climate Action

Our community driven climate action now campaign continued this year after success of the climate emergency campaign that saw the Sunshine Coast Regional Council formally acknowledge the climate emergency. To celebrate the people powered success we worked with the community team to develop a mini documentary that explores the impacts of climate change on the region and documents the story behind the campaign. The documentary is still in development and we look forward to hosting a special launch later in the year.

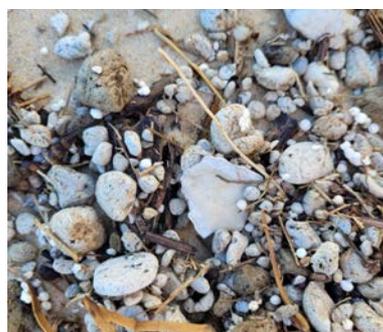
The other major focus in the climate campaign this year was partnering with the Queensland Conservation Council to distribute the brightly coloured Climate Action Now signs throughout the region. The signs were given out free at events and market stalls and people were encouraged to hang them on their letterbox, fence or even stick them on their wheelie bins. The signs are part of a national campaign to put pressure on both the state and federal government to take bold climate action. The signs are a demonstration that constituents actively support climate action and want to see the political will needed to address the issue. The signs were a strong feature throughout the World Environment Day Festival and at various market stalls throughout the region. In the lead up to the federal election in May 2022 the signs played a critical role in showcasing the strong community support for climate focused leaders.

## Marine Restoration

This year SCEC continued to advocate for the removal of the lethal nets and drumlines that are installed at 23 beaches throughout the Sunshine Coast and throughout Queensland through our work with the Nets Out Now Coalition.

The unprecedented flooding event in early 2022 had lasting impacts throughout the region. In particular, the effects of marine pontoons were felt across the region as hundreds of thousands of small polystyrene pieces littered the beaches. The pontoons washed ashore, after breaking free from moorings in Brisbane river.

A phenomenal community effort was undertaken along with local councils and the state government to try and contain the impacts of the pontoons. Unfortunately, still to this day you can find tiny polystyrene particles along the northern beaches. This phenomena attracted lots of media attention and a stakeholder roundtable was held by Noosa Council to document learnings from this event and put forward recommendations in order to be better prepared in future flooding events.





# EVENTS AND OUTREACH

## Green Drinks

This year we launched the inaugural Sunshine Coast Green Drinks! Green Drinks are a community driven informal networking platform that happens in towns and cities all over the world.

Developed in partnership with the phenomenal Deb Moesley and Joey Kohnke, the events were a real hit with over 40 people attending the first one held at the Old Ambulance Station in Nambour.

## Les Hall Young Conservationist Award

This year we were again honored to partner with the Hall family to deliver the Les Hall Young Conservationist Award. The winners were announced at the For the Ocean event, part of the month long program of events for WED Fest 2022.

Congratulations to this year's winner Taylor for her outstanding contribution to the protection and restoration of the marine environment. Congratulations to Spencer Hitchen, Finalist this year for his unwavering advocacy for the protection of threatened species habitat. Both gave passionate speeches on the night.





## World Environment Day Festival (WED Fest) 2022

Following the success of the 2021 WED Fest month long program of events, the 2022 festival followed the same format. After evaluating key learnings from the new format with SCEC member groups we refined the festival to a smaller program to allow ease of management.

This year's theme was 'Only One Earth' and the program had a range of events that called for nature action, climate action and pollution action, showcasing practical initiatives to protect our Only One Earth.

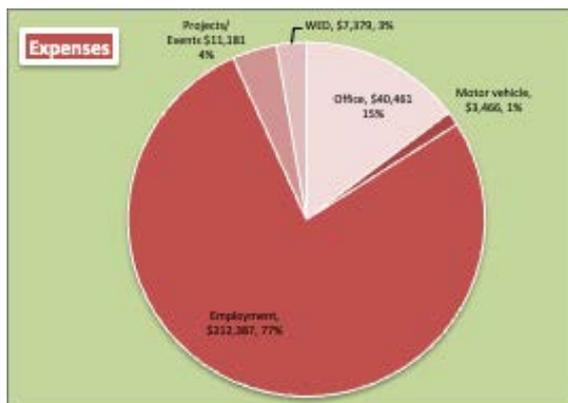
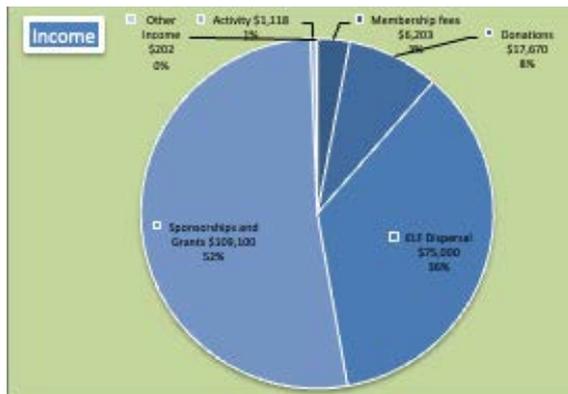
The program featured:

- 17 events
- 1500 trees planted across multiple sites
- 25 ecosystem restoration projects showcased
- 12 Community groups highlighted and engaging with a new audience





# TREASURER'S REPORT



SCEC experienced both deliberate and unexpected major operational changes in 2022/23 which has contributed to a unprofitable year financially. Membership fees and donations have dropped significantly, while expenditure, excluding increasing employment costs, has remained relatively steady.

Our total income was \$209,293, and our total expenses were \$276,871. We finished the year with a net loss of \$67,578, leaving our net equity severely depleted at \$2,879. Looking forward, our 2023/24 Management Committee will need to pivot quickly to determine and implement bold and innovative new ideas and practices to ensure the long term financial and operational viability of SCEC as an organisation.

Thanks to everyone that has donated and assisted in other ways (including staff and volunteers) to contribute to our organisation over the past financial year.

Sue Etheridge  
Treasurer

Balance Sheet - 31 March 2023	
<b>Assets</b>	
Cash on hand	\$49,615
Trade debtors	\$0
Stock on Hand	\$3,942
Property, plant & equipment	\$3,835
Current tax assets	\$0
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$57,392</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>	
Trade creditors	\$350
Tax liabilities	\$13,007
Payroll provisions	\$30,450
Payables	\$10,706
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$54,513</b>
<b>Net Equity</b>	<b>\$2,879</b>

<b>Income</b>	
Membership Fees	\$6,203
Donations	\$17,670
ELF Dispersal	\$75,000
Sponsorships & Grants	\$109,100
Activity generated	\$1,118
Other Income	\$202
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$209,293</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	
Office	\$40,461
Motor vehicle	\$3,466
Employment	\$212,387
Projects/Events	\$11,181
WED	\$7,379
Other Expenses	\$1,997
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$276,871</b>
<b>Loss</b>	<b>-\$67,578</b>



# MEMBER GROUPS

*SCEC is privileged to be representing diverse and committed organisations and our advocacy is strengthened by the breadth and depth of the people involved in them. To all these people and organisations we say - thank you!*

Australian Marine Conservation Society  
 Backyards for Biodiversity  
 Barung Landcare Association Inc.  
 Bat Rescue Inc.  
 Blackall Range Land Use and Planning Association  
 Bribie Island Environmental Protection Association Inc.  
 Conondale Range Conservation Association Inc.  
 Coolum and North Shore Coast Care Inc.  
 Coolum Residents Association Inc.  
 Cooran Earth Rights  
 Crystal Waters Community Co-Operative Ltd  
 Currimundi Catchment Care Group Inc.  
 Development Watch Inc.  
 ECollaboration Ltd  
 Environmental Legacy Foundation Ltd  
 Fraser Island Defenders Organisation  
 Friends Of Buddina Ltd  
 Friends of Lake Weyba Inc.  
 Friends of the Forest Inc  
 Friends of Yaroomba  
 Glasshouse Mountains Advancement Network Inc.  
 Hinterland Bush Links Inc.  
 Lake Baroon Catchment Care Group Inc.  
 Landsborough Area Community Association Inc.  
 Manduka Cooperative  
 Maple Street Co-operative Society Limited  
 Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee Association Inc.  
 Mooloolah River Waterwatch and Landcare Inc.  
 Nambour Transition Towns  
 Native Plants Sunshine Coast  
 Night Eyes Water and Landcare Inc.  
 Noosa and District Landcare Group Inc.  
 Noosa Biosphere Reserve Foundation  
 Noosa Integrated Catchment Association Inc.  
 Noosa Parks Association Inc.

Organisation Sunshine Coast Association of Residents Inc.  
 Permaculture Noosa Inc.  
 Petrie Creek Catchment Care Group Inc.  
 Positive Change for Marine Life  
 Queensland Water and Land Carers Inc.  
 Sunshine Coast Lets Inc.  
 Surfrider Foundation Sunshine Coast  
 Sustainable Population Australia Inc.  
 Take Action for Pumicestone Passage Inc.  
 Ten Little Pieces  
 Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland - Sunshine Coast & Hinterland Branch  
 Wildlife Volunteers Association Inc.  
 Woodfordia Inc.  
 Yandina and District Community Association Inc.  
 Yandina Community Gardens Inc.  
 Zero Emissions Noosa Inc.





# SPONSORSHIP AND GRANTS

The Sunshine Coast Environment Council relies on the generous support from our sponsors and grants.

In the 2022/2023 financial year we received the grants from the following organisations:

- Environmental Legacy Foundation
- Queensland Community Foundation
- Queensland Water and Land Carers
- Queensland Government - Sponsorship
- Sunshine Coast Council community grants program and partnership program
- Patagonia

Thank you to all of our wonderful supporters, sponsors, members and member groups for supporting our vital advocacy work.



**SCEC gratefully acknowledges the generous support of these organisations**





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# VALE DES RITCHIE

DES RITCHIE, MA, BComm, Dip Agr, OAM

AWARDED HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIP OF SCEC IN 1994

Desmond Maurice Ritchie was born in 1931 in Ballinamallard, Northern Ireland, and spent his childhood years on family farms there and in Enniskillen. He attended college in Dublin and worked in the early days of computers in London, Ireland, Canada and then Australia, but was drawn back to the farming life in Torbanlea, Queensland.

Des arrived on the Sunshine Coast in 1979 and explored living in a community called Shalom in the Obi Obi Valley. He joined Move for Peace which he represented at a SCEC meeting run by Mark Ricketts and Elaine Green at Mudjimba. This was the catalyst for Des to join SCEC. The hot issue at the time was an outrageous development proposal to build a chairlift up the ancient face of Mt Coolum and desecrate it with restaurants and viewing platforms. Des was soon inveigled into becoming SCEC's Treasurer, then Coordinator from 1989 to 1991 and President from 1991 to 1993.

Des describes these times as "the most satisfying and productive part of my life – doing something to preserve life in its many forms on this planet".

Des was manager at The Meeting Place in Nambour for several years in the 1980s and through this centre he met Bill Hauritz, co-ordinator of the Maleny Folk Festival. Irish music notwithstanding, Des claims that it was environmental education he had in mind when he joined Bill's team. In 1992 the first GREENhouse venue commenced at the festival (now at Woodford) and it has been operating ever since for more than 20 years.

For 20 years Des was President of Queensland Folk Federation (now Woodfordia Inc) producers of the Woodford Folk Festival. He has been a catalyst for this festival's major environmental initiatives – including the planting of 100,000 trees.

His dedication and passion have motivated and changed the lives of many. Des is one of those people whose personal and community actions reflect the true meaning of sustainability – that we humans must live within, protect and enhance the bounty that nature has provided us with, for if we don't, we are robbing from future generations.

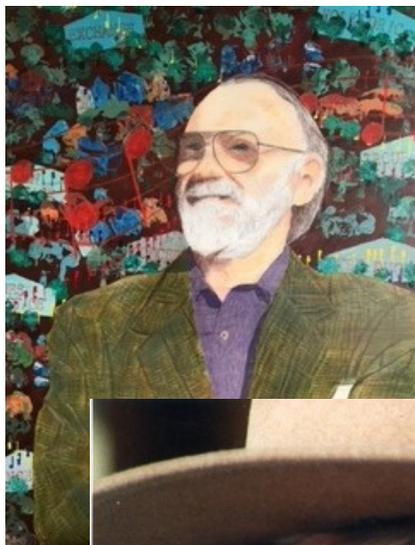
His environmental interests were broad – he was a Maroochy Waterwatch volunteer water quality tester, Manager of the Sunshine Coast Landcare Environment Action Program (LEAP), represented SCEC on the South East Queensland 2020 Planning Program and the 2003 Community Visioning Project. He was a member of the Ethics Committee, University Sunshine Coast for many years. After turning 80 in 2011, a highlight was achieved in 2012 when Des was awarded an Order of Australia medal for services to conservation, the environment and the arts.

Celebrations for Des' 90th birthday were postponed due to COVID in 2021 and restrictions around visits to his nursing home. Des spent the last years of his life in Sundale at Palmwoods where his lovely nature endeared him to others. His lovely Irish lilt and sense of humour will live long in the minds of all who knew him.

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# VALE DES RITCHIE





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# VALE

# CHERYL SEABROOK

With great sadness, I must advise SCEC members of the recent passing of Cheryl Seabrook, the tireless secretary of the Conondale Range Committee, more recently known as Conondale Range Conservation Association Inc.

The Conondale Range Committee was formed 47 years ago, in 1976, to press for an expanded national park in the Conondale Ranges. For the last 40 of those years Cheryl was its secretary and principal organiser.

She was a passionate bushwalker, a tireless campaigner, a wonderful tree propagator and much more. She wrote the first book of walks in the Conondales and later expanded this to “Walk on the Wilder Side in the Conondales”, not to mention producing wonderful and informative newsletters.

Small in stature but huge in energy, she liaised with The Wilderness Society to bring media tours to the Conondales during the RFA campaign and organised a number of milestone celebrations at the Charlie Moreland overflow area.

Some 20 years ago, she conjured up a breakfast for visiting NPAQ visitors, added poetry, and so was born the Kenilworth Poets’ Breakfast the CRC’s annual fundraiser which saved them from the need to sell lamingtons or hold chook raffles in pubs.

Most recently, back in 2016, she organised the CRC’s 40 th anniversary celebration weekend at Sunday Creek Environmental Education Centre.

On the home front, she established a Nature Refuge on her property at Walli Mountain, converting an old farm into a biodiverse habitat.

Cheryl had a number of health issues over recent years, including open heart surgery, and sadly rarely left home, a total change to her weekly walks up Mt Allan and outrigger paddling at Noosa.

In all her years of activity, she never sought the limelight, but was so active behind the scenes in seeing the Conondale National Park come to reality, and in continuing to keep a watchful eye over the Conondales.

She was a good friend to many and will be sadly missed.

Ian Mackay

President Conondale Range Conservation Association Inc and SCEC Life Member

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# VALE CHERYL SEABROOK



Past and present hard working girls of Conondale Range Committee



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SUNSHINE COAST  
Environment Council  
[www.scec.org.au](http://www.scec.org.au)



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