

25 March 2021

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Dear Madam/Sir

### Natural Environment Policy

Outdoors Queensland is the peak body for the outdoor recreation sector in Queensland. We represent outdoor recreation organisations and individuals in Queensland, consisting of a range of outdoor industry stakeholders, including local governments, schools with outdoor education focus, commercial operators, activity-focused peak bodies, clubs and other community organisations.

The mission of Outdoors Queensland is to ensure that all people have opportunities to create connections with Queensland's outdoors. Our vision is to create a world where the outdoors is a vital part of every healthy life - a healthy world comes from a balanced life, incorporating outdoor activities for all people.

Outdoors Queensland supports the development of the new Natural Environment Policy by Ipswich City Council, and we appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft policy. We consider this policy as another step forward in ensuring that more people have opportunities to create connections with the outdoors.

Ipswich City Council can significantly contribute to positive outcomes for the natural environment in relation to both the natural areas owned/managed directly by Council and the influence exerted by Council on activities conducted in natural areas across the city.

Although Ipswich City Council is a member of Outdoors Queensland, that relationship as a member has not influenced the feedback that we are providing on the draft policy.

Research clearly shows that access to outdoor activities in natural areas increases the liveability of cities, and this is reflected in the community and stakeholder themes published in the discussion paper regarding this draft policy.

Outdoors Queensland supports the Policy Statement proposed by Council. We strongly support the alignment of Council's planning scheme with this Natural Environment Policy. Failure to align and implement the Natural Environment Policy in the planning scheme risks rendering this policy ineffective.



Outdoors Queensland provides broad support for the Policy Principles set out in the Discussion Paper, with the following comments:

1. The second dot point under Natural Area Restoration and Protection refers to the implementation of “sound environmental principles” on council owned and managed land.

The third dot point under the definition of Sound Environmental Management Principles says that “visitor use should be managed for inspirational, educational, cultural and nature-based recreation at a level that will maintain natural values and cultural landscapes”. This wording seems to be an action (visitor management), rather than a principle. We suggest that this could be re-worded as follows:

- Maintaining and enhancing natural values and cultural landscapes for inspirational, educational, cultural and nature-based recreation

This suggested modified wording could reduce potential conflict between the Natural Area Restoration and Protection policy principles and the Experiencing Nature policy principles.

We do not believe that there is a binary choice between either restoring/protecting natural areas or experiencing nature. Outdoor activities, when facilitated correctly and managed appropriately, lead to preservation of the natural environment. When people benefit from positive experiences in nature, they become advocates for the restoration and protection of natural areas.

2. Outdoors Queensland strongly supports the Policy Principles set out under the “Experiencing Nature” heading
3. We suggest that the third dot point under Governance, Measuring and Reporting could be improved by including measurement and reporting on visitation, as follows:
  - Identify, collect, monitor, review and report about natural values, environmental performance *and visitation*

Measurement and reporting on visitation to natural areas is an important aspect of understanding these experiences. If visitation is not measured, it is not valued.

We would welcome further discussion on any points raised in this submission. Outdoors Queensland understands that this submission may be published by Ipswich City Council as part of the community consultation process.

Outdoors Queensland looks forward to the finalisation and implementation of Ipswich’s Natural Environment Policy.

Yours sincerely



Dom Courtney  
Executive Officer

