

Summary of public consultation

Cairns South State Development Area

March 2020

Overview

The Cairns South State Development Area (SDA) was declared in November 2018 as a special economic zone for regionally significant industrial development to support the long-term needs of the economy and create jobs.

In 2019, the Coordinator-General identified an opportunity to expand the Cairns South SDA to include land around the Mulgrave Mill in Gordonvale. A draft development scheme was also prepared which addressed both the potential SDA expansion and the Cairns South SDA.

Following public consultation on the potential SDA expansion and draft development scheme and the thorough review and analysis of submissions received, the Cairns South SDA was varied by regulation on 21 February 2020. The Cairns South SDA Development Scheme (development scheme) was approved and came into effect on 13 March 2020.

The purpose of this document is to provide a summary of the submissions received through the public consultation process on the potential SDA expansion and the draft development scheme, and the Coordinator-General's response to the matters raised in the submissions.

Public consultation process

The Coordinator-General undertook formal public consultation on the potential SDA expansion and draft development scheme between 10 September 2019 and 11 October 2019.

Notification of public consultation occurred via:

- letters or emails to key stakeholders, all landholders/residents within the boundary and immediately adjoining the existing Cairns South SDA boundary, and all landholders/residents within and immediately adjoining the potential expansion area. Correspondence was accompanied by a fact sheet and mapping
- public notices in the Cairns Post and Courier Mail advising of the formal consultation stage, details of the submission process and contact details for further information
- updates to the Coordinator-General's website to include information about the potential expansion and draft development scheme, details of the submission process and contact details for further information.

Stakeholders were invited to provide formal submissions and request meetings with representatives from the Office of the Coordinator-General during the consultation period. Numerous stakeholder presentations and meetings were held before, during and following the formal consultation period.

Submissions

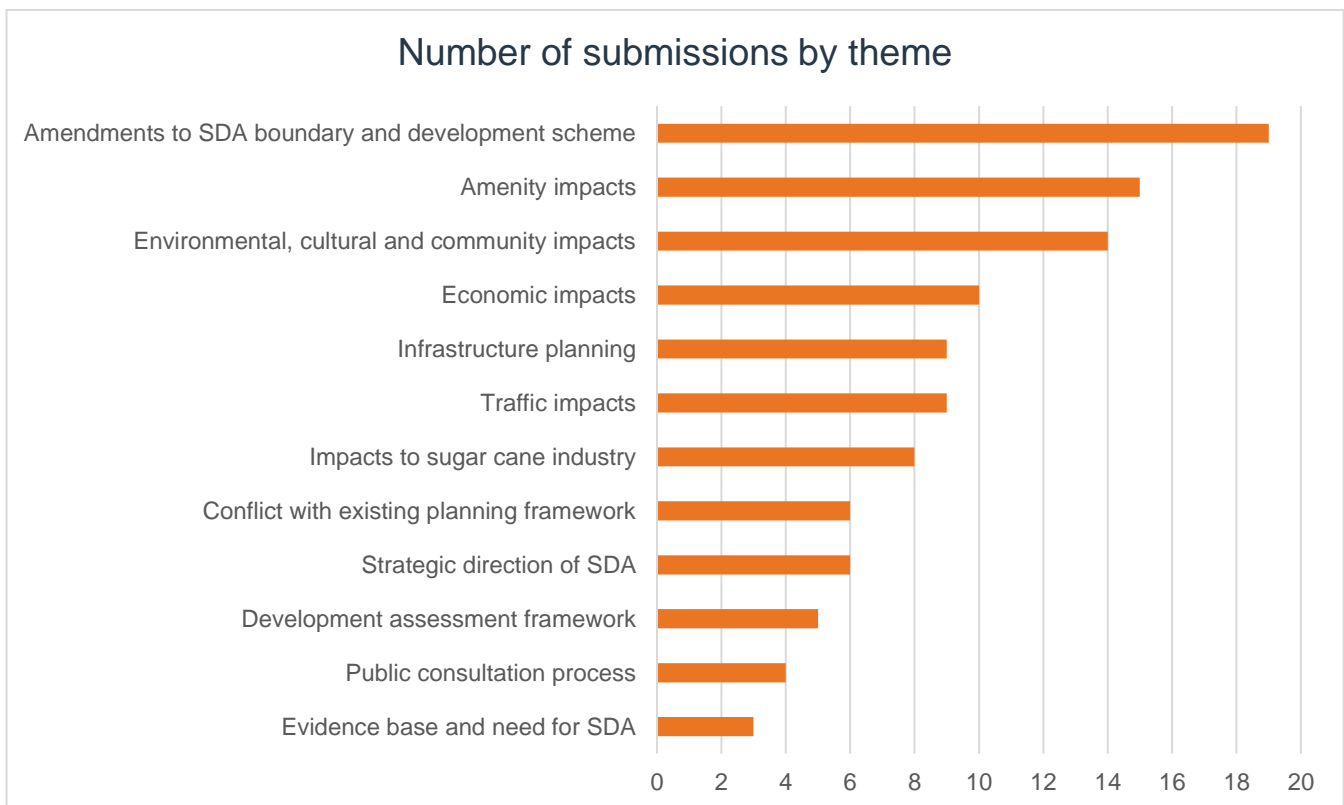
Number of submissions

A total of 33 submissions were received during the formal public consultation period. Submissions were received from a range of stakeholder groups and individuals, including:

- landholders/residents within the SDA and potential expansion area
- landholders/residents immediately adjoining the SDA and potential expansion area
- key industry and business groups in the region
- local government
- Queensland government agencies.

Submissions themes

A range of matters were raised in the submissions. These matters were broadly categorised into 12 themes. Each theme and the number of submissions received in relation to each theme is presented in the figure below.



Key issues and responses

All submissions received were thoroughly analysed and considered by the Coordinator-General and government in making its decision to vary the Cairns South SDA and approve the development scheme. The submissions informed final changes to the SDA boundary and development scheme. Below is an outline of the key themes raised in the submissions and the Coordinator-General's response and actions to manage and/or mitigate the issues.

| Amendments to SDA boundary | |
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| <p>Issue: Impacts on residential uses as a result of being included in the expansion area</p> | <p>Response: The southern part of the SDA is intended to meet the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the need to protect rural land uses and the Mulgrave Mill from urban encroachment • the need to secure rural land to ensure a sustainable supply of cane to the Mulgrave Mill • the need for industrial land adjacent to the Mulgrave Mill for bagasse storage and industrial development opportunities, including industries that require co-location with the Mulgrave Mill for use of by-products, water and power. <p>In consideration of the above, five properties were removed from the proposed southern part of the SDA as they were deemed unsuitable for rural production. A sixth property was removed as it was not considered to be under pressure from urban encroachment.</p> <p>There has also been a change from the Mulgrave Mill Industry Precinct to the Environmental Management Precinct for some properties in Sues Street to more accurately reflect existing and envisaged future uses for those properties.</p> <p><i>Note: urban encroachment means the expansion of residential and business uses outside of a centralised area.</i></p> |
| Amendments to the preferred development intent for some precincts | |
| <p>Issue: The Environmental Management Precinct does not align with existing land uses</p> | <p>Response: The Office of the Coordinator-General undertook a review of the Environmental Management Precinct to ensure it appropriately captured existing land uses. In response, the boundary of the Environmental Management Precinct has been realigned to exclude existing cultivated areas (i.e. cane crops), and where adjoining the Mulgrave River, to only include the vegetated riparian areas.</p> |
| <p>Issue: Concern that continued occupation of residential uses in the Rural Use Precinct would not be supported</p> | <p>Response: To clarify that the continued occupation of residential properties in the Rural Use Precinct will be supported, the intent of this precinct has been amended. Furthermore, given the change in precinct for some properties in Sues Street to the Environmental Management Precinct, that precinct's preferred development intent has also been amended.</p> <p>The development scheme now clarifies that a dwelling house may continue to be occupied and used as a place of residence in the Rural Use and Environmental Management Precincts.</p> <p>The development scheme has also been amended to state that the continued occupation of dwelling houses and ancillary structures (i.e. garden sheds) also includes the maintenance or reestablishment of a house (reestablishment in the event of natural disaster or fire).</p> |

| Amenity impacts | |
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| <p>Issue: Potential impact of emissions from development on residential property including dust, noise and smell</p> | <p>Response: One measure to manage dust, noise and odour is the separation of industrial uses from sensitive land uses, including dwelling houses. Approximately 60% of the Cairns South SDA has been identified for sugar cane farming, sugar research, other rural uses and the management of environmental values. This will create a large buffer that will separate industrial uses from dwelling houses. To ensure this buffer is effective, rural uses (i.e. cropping) are encouraged and the intensification of sensitive uses such as residential properties is not supported.</p> <p><i>Note: intensification of sensitive uses may include construction of a new house on vacant land.</i></p> <p>In addition, the development scheme requires development to manage emissions in accordance with best practice in order to minimise impacts on residential areas and sensitive land uses.</p> <p><i>Note: examples of a sensitive land use include houses, caravan parks, schools, childcare centres and retirement villages.</i></p> |
| <p>Issue: Impacts on view corridors and the general rural lifestyle of the area</p> | <p>Response: Assessment criteria in the development scheme states that all buildings and structures are required to minimise visual impacts through design and landscaping.</p> <p>However, it is acknowledged there may be some visual impacts from industrial development. Therefore, to manage these impacts, assessment criteria has been included that requires building design to be of a high-quality.</p> |
| <p>Issue: Potential impacts from bagasse storage and transportation</p> | <p>Response: Any SDA application for a development proposal that stores and/or transports bagasse will be comprehensively assessed against the development scheme. Any impacts will be minimised or managed.</p> |
| <p>Issue: Safety issues related to the school on Crossland Road</p> | <p>Response: Safety impacts from industrial traffic will be considered in the assessment of SDA applications. All development will be required to manage impacts on the safety of road users.</p> |
| Environmental, cultural and community impacts | |
| <p>Issue: Potential impacts to the Gordonvale community and environment including potential impacts to health, natural habitats, water quality and waterways</p> | <p>Response: Assessment criteria in the development scheme requires development to manage impacts on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • environmental, cultural and community values • water quality (i.e. stormwater) • flooding • traffic network • air, noise and dust emissions. <p>An SDA application will be required to be supported by the necessary plans and studies to demonstrate that environmental, cultural and community values will be appropriately managed.</p> <p>In addition, areas with significant vegetation have been included in the Environmental Management Precinct to protect environmental values. The Environmental Management Precinct is to remain largely development free.</p> |
| Economic impacts | |
| <p>Issue: The SDA and development scheme will impact on rural and residential property prices</p> | <p>Response: Property values are impacted by a range of factors. Generally, the underlying zone plays a part in the development potential of the land, which may affect the value of land.</p> <p>Large areas of the SDA are in the Rural Use Precinct; in these locations the underlying intent of the land use remains generally the same. The continuation of existing rural activities in the Rural Use Precinct is supported.</p> |

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| | <p>As a comparison, sales of rural lots in the Bromelton and Bundaberg SDAs have continued to occur at market rates after each SDA was declared.</p> <p>For land in industry precincts, property prices may be affected by the development potential of these lots. Changing land from rural to an industry precinct would increase the development potential. As the market for industrial land tightens in the Cairns region, due to supply and demand, the impact on property prices may be positive.</p> <p>However, the impact of an SDA on property values is very difficult to predict given the range of market factors involved.</p> |
| <p>Issue: Ongoing viability of non-cane rural production land</p> | <p>Response: The intent of the Rural Use Precinct is to keep agricultural production and avoid the fragmentation of lot sizes. Existing lawful uses of land are protected under the <i>State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971</i> (SDPWO Act).</p> <p><i>Note: fragmentation of lot sizes means the creation of small lots that are not suitable for rural production.</i></p> <p>To provide clarity, the definition of cropping in the development scheme has been amended to include additional examples that exist in the local area, including turf farm.</p> |
| <p>Infrastructure planning</p> | |
| <p>Issue: Limited existing capacity of infrastructure networks</p> | <p>Response: The Office of the Coordinator-General has undertaken a preliminary infrastructure analysis to identify the infrastructure requirements to support future industrial development in the SDA.</p> <p>The infrastructure requirements, costs and sequencing for infrastructure provision have been identified. However, as the SDA has a medium-long term development horizon, it is hard to predict when development will occur, and the final mix of land uses.</p> <p>The Office of the Coordinator-General continues to work with Cairns Regional Council, infrastructure providers and State government agencies to refine the infrastructure analysis. It is important to note, the infrastructure analysis will continue to be updated as further information becomes available and development occurs.</p> |
| <p>Issue: No provisions in the development scheme in relation to the potential timing and cost of infrastructure networks</p> | <p>Response: Assessment criteria in the development scheme requires development to be adequately serviced by infrastructure. It also requires development to design infrastructure that will maximise cost efficiency.</p> <p>This approach ensures that all infrastructure is provided, and that consideration is given to staging across the development lifecycle in the SDA. As above, the uncertainties around when development will occur and the final mix of land uses make it difficult to put definitive requirements for infrastructure requirements and timing in the development scheme.</p> |
| <p>Issue: Placing stormwater infrastructure in the Rural Use Precinct would impact business and cane farm productivity</p> | <p>Response: It is preferred that all infrastructure required for industrial development is located in industry precincts, except where it is not reasonably possible to do so.</p> <p>For example, stormwater infrastructure may be required in the Rural Use Precinct to ensure the efficient function of infrastructure across the whole SDA. However, if this is required, the placement of infrastructure in the precinct will need to be designed to minimise impacts on existing land uses.</p> |
| <p>Traffic impacts</p> | |
| <p>Issue: Road upgrades required to facilitate development in the SDA</p> | <p>Response: A road infrastructure assessment has been undertaken for the Cairns South SDA. This included local and sub-regional considerations using a staged approach to development.</p> <p>An internal road network was identified based on development footprints, with modelling undertaken to understand the internal and external road and intersection upgrade requirements.</p> |

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| | <p>The assessment identified that, under the ultimate case scenario, significant road upgrades would be required in response to the growth in general and heavy vehicle traffic. A number of intersections and upgrades have been recommended in the assessment, pending further detailed technical work and future land use planning.</p> |
| <p>Issue: Potential impacts from increased heavy vehicle traffic movement in the area and the broader social impacts to the town of Gordonvale</p> | <p>Response: The road infrastructure assessment took a network approach so that all heavy vehicle traffic will bypass residential areas. This approach is expected to be retained long-term to manage/mitigate the potential impact to residential areas from industrial development.</p> <p>Further detailed traffic assessment will focus on minimising impacts on residential areas and the Gordonvale township.</p> |
| Impacts to the sugar cane industry | |
| <p>Issue: Impacts to sugar cane industry, including destruction of arable land, loss of sugar cane productions, impacts on sugar cane research and cane rail infrastructure, and the cumulative impacts from industrial development</p> | <p>Response: Approximately 60% of the Cairns South has been identified for sugar cane production, sugar research and environmental management.</p> <p>The development scheme has the following provisions relating to the importance of the sugar industry in the region:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • overall objective requiring development to minimise impacts on the viability of rural activities in the Cairns South SDA • overall objective requiring development to maintain the functionality of the cane rail network • strong provisions in the preferred development intent of the Rural Use Precinct to protect rural production and limit urban encroachment • a Sugar Research Precinct which acknowledges and protects the ongoing operation of the Meringa Sugar Experiment Station • SDA wide assessment criteria requiring development to mitigate impacts arising from emissions on sugar cane land • SDA wide assessment criteria relating to impacts on water quality and flooding to mitigate these impacts on rural uses and receiving waters. <p>The Office of the Coordinator-General is proposing to undertake water quality testing to determine a base line for consideration in future development assessment. Investigations will also continue into identifying potentially underutilised and under cultivated land parcels in the region which could support sugar cane production.</p> |
| Conflict with established planning frameworks | |
| <p>Issue: Cairns South SDA conflicts with the current planning frameworks for the region, such as the Far North Queensland Regional Plan 2009-2031 (FNQ regional plan), the Cairns Regional Council's planning scheme, including an understanding that the Mt Peter master planned area was to be the last urban growth area in Cairns, and the State Planning Policy and strategic cropping areas</p> | <p>Response: SDAs are areas of land declared under the SDPWO Act for industry, infrastructure corridors, major development sites and public works.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that industrial development in this location is inconsistent with a range of existing state planning policies and the FNQ Regional Plan.</p> <p>The Coordinator-General's view is that there is a shortfall in available land to accommodate regionally significant industrial development in the region in the medium to long-term. The SDA provides an effective planning mechanism to secure the required land for industrial development and protect against urban encroachment into the medium to long-term.</p> <p>In addition, the SDA provides an opportunity for the Cairns region to diversify its economy.</p> |

| Strategic direction of development scheme | |
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| <p>Issue: The SDA potentially competes with other industrial areas in the region</p> | <p>Response: The Cairns South SDA provides land for regionally significant industrial development for the medium to-long term as well as industrial activities that require co-location with the Mulgrave Mill.</p> <p>Nearby industrial areas envisage a range of mixed-use development, comprising lower order industrial activities as well as health, recreation, showrooms and big box retail, knowledge and research land uses.</p> <p>The Cairns South SDA is not intended to compete with nearby industrial areas and other industrial areas in the region, but rather complement and accommodate large-scale and difficult to locate regionally significant industrial development.</p> |
| Development assessment framework | |
| <p>Issue: Identifying referral entities in the referral stage of the development scheme</p> | <p>Response: The Coordinator-General has the discretion to decide the referral entities for a particular SDA application or request. This provides flexibility for the Coordinator-General to determine the referral entities based on the complexities or interests that may be triggered by the development.</p> <p>Identifying specific referral entities in the development scheme could fetter the ability of the Coordinator-General to decide who the most appropriate referral entities are. Instead, an amendment to the definition of 'referral entities' has been made to include examples, i.e. Cairns Regional Council.</p> |
| Public consultation process | |
| <p>Issue: Public consultation process undertaken and lack of broader engagement with the community in Gordonvale</p> | <p>Response: Prior to commencing the formal consultation process, the Office of the Coordinator-General undertook targeted stakeholder consultation with key State government agencies, business groups and key landholders in the southern part of the SDA.</p> <p>To support the public consultation process, the Office of the Coordinator-General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> mailed correspondence to all landholders within and immediately adjoining the Cairns South SDA provided an information pack with the correspondence which included the process for making a submission and requesting a meeting with representatives from the Office of the Coordinator-General, map and factsheet placed public notices in the Cairns Post and Courier Mail updated the Coordinator-General's website. <p>Engagement with affected landholders in the Cairns South SDA is ongoing. Representatives from the Office of the Coordinator-General are available to discuss concerns or meet with stakeholders.</p> |
| Evidence base and need for SDA | |
| <p>Issue: No demonstrated need and demand for industrial land proposed by the Cairns South SDA. It was stated that Cairns Plan 2016 provides the required land to meet demand into the future</p> | <p>Response: The Coordinator-General's view is that while there is sufficient supply of land for lower impact industrial development, there is a shortfall in available land to accommodate regionally significant industrial development into the medium to long-term. The region is anticipated to undergo a period of growth and the Cairns South SDA provides sufficient industrial land to support the predicted growth.</p> |