

Potential Cairns South State Development Area

Overview | July 2017



The Department of State Development

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Background

The Queensland Government is focused on driving jobs and economic growth in the Cairns region. The Coordinator-General and the Department of State Development have been investigating the availability of existing industrial land in the Cairns region to see if it meets the need for future regionally significant industrial development. Although the Cairns region currently supports a range of industries, regionally significant industrial development requires access to transport networks, large areas of land, and separation from incompatible uses.

The Coordinator-General believes there is a shortfall in suitable existing industrial land for regionally significant industrial development. As a result, an area to the south of Cairns has been identified as a potential State development area (SDA).

To identify this potential SDA, the Coordinator-General considered economic development opportunities, physical and environmental constraints, environmental and community impacts, and infrastructure requirements. From this, an area of land located to the east of the Bruce Highway and north of Gordonvale, has been identified as potentially suitable for future regionally significant industrial development.

The potential Cairns South SDA would provide an opportunity for future regionally significant industrial development and preserve land for the long-term. It would provide a unique opportunity to diversify the range of economy-boosting industrial development in

the Cairns region, creating jobs and also strengthening the wider Far North Queensland economy.

A draft boundary for the potential Cairns South SDA is now available. Community and stakeholder feedback is being sought to help decide whether an SDA should be established in this area.

This document outlines the work that has been undertaken to date which has informed the location of the potential Cairns South SDA. It also describes how you can provide feedback to the Coordinator-General about the potential Cairns South SDA.

Figure 1 shows the process of investigating, declaring, planning for, and obtaining stakeholder and community feedback on this potential SDA. It also shows where we are currently in the process. Additional stakeholder and community feedback will be sought during the development scheme preparation should an SDA be declared.

SDAs are established to:

- create jobs and strengthen regional economies
- cluster industries together to generate economies of scale and scope
- provide guidance and greater development certainty for industry by providing a 'one-stop-shop' for major development approvals
- control development in a way that considers existing industry and surrounding development
- provide access to land when needed for development
- manage incompatible land use and protect environmental values

The role of the Coordinator-General

Queensland's Coordinator-General is responsible for the planning, establishment and ongoing management of SDAs throughout Queensland.

An SDA is an area of land declared under the *State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971* (SDPWO Act) for industry, infrastructure corridors and major public works.

Planning and development within an SDA is controlled through a development scheme, which is a regulatory document prepared in accordance with the SDPWO Act.

There are currently 10 SDAs throughout Queensland.

In an SDA, the Coordinator-General:

- undertakes land use planning and establishes the development assessment process for regulated development through the relevant development scheme
- implements the development scheme
- assesses and decides applications and requests that can be made under the development scheme
- has compulsory land acquisition powers.

The Coordinator-General can acquire land within an SDA using the *Acquisition of Land Act 1967*.

Timeline

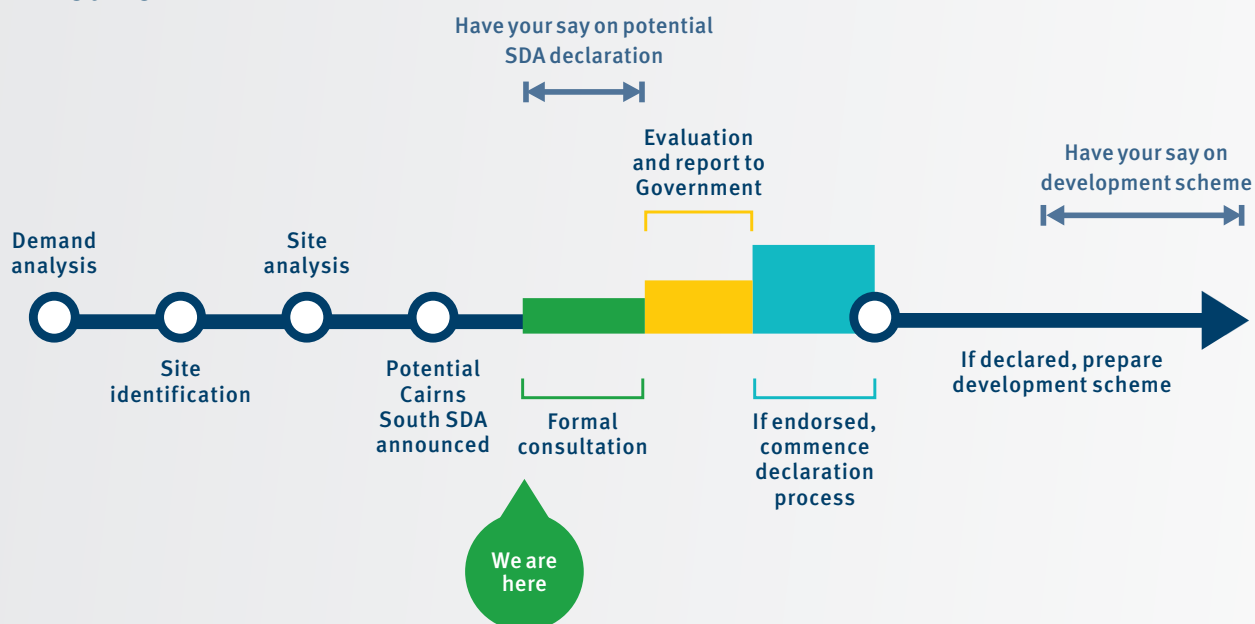


Figure 1

Potential Cairns South State Development Area

The potential SDA is located to the south of Cairns and north of Gordonvale at Wrights Creek. The location of the potential SDA is shown on the following map (Figure 2), and includes land from the Bruce Highway in the west to Mackey Creek in the east, and from France Road in the north to Hall Road in the south.

The site has direct access to the Bruce Highway and one of the longest stretches of generally straight rail line close to Cairns. The Queensland Rail North Coast line forms the western boundary of the potential SDA, which would provide a unique opportunity for freight logistics by integrating rail and road uses into any future development at the location.

The area is mainly zoned rural, with the majority of land used for unirrigated sugar cane cultivation. Other land uses include:

- two horticultural enterprises, a turf farm and a flower farm

- rural dwellings
- a communications facility
- the state-listed cultural heritage site of Meringa Sugar Experimental Station in the south-western corner, adjacent to the Bruce Highway and Hall Road.

To the north, west and east of the potential SDA, the land is used mainly for sugar cane cultivation. To the south of the potential SDA the land is used mainly for smaller lot sugar cane cultivation mixed with rural residential lots closer to Gordonvale. Agricultural land to the west of the Bruce Highway is within the Mount Peter Local Area Plan and is planned for future urban uses.

Benefits of the potential Cairns South SDA



industry attraction and project facilitation



managing incompatible land use



catalyst for regionally significant industrial development



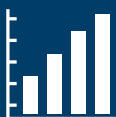
promoting a diversified regional economy



providing employment and growth opportunities



meeting the demands of industry and enterprise



preserving land for future growth opportunities



ready access to significant rail and road networks

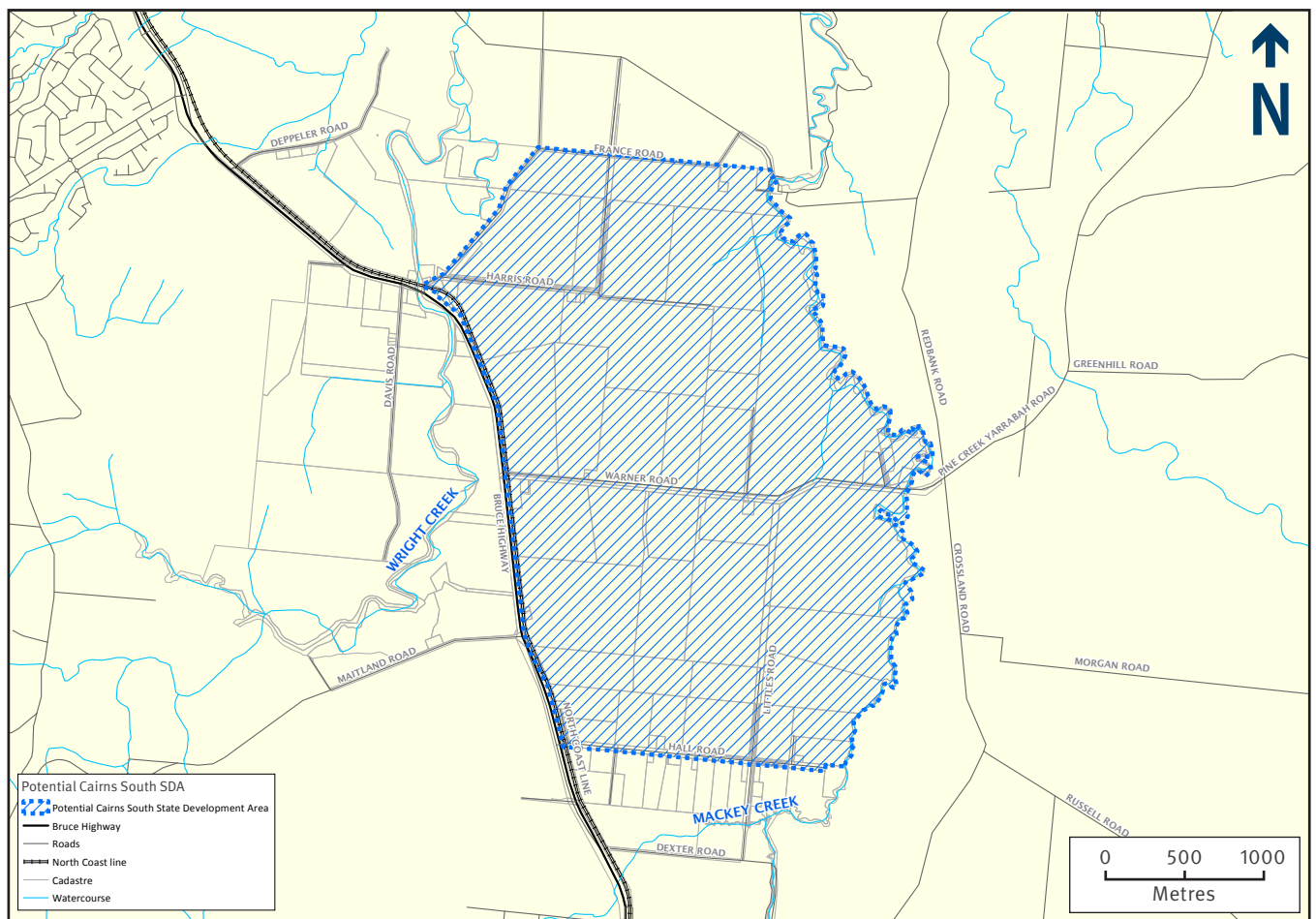


Figure 2: Potential Cairns South SDA (July 2017)

Considerations

In considering a potential SDA in this location, the Coordinator-General is looking at:

- industrial land supply within the Cairns region
- economic, environmental and social values of suitable sites and their surrounds
- potential impacts to agriculture
- regional economic growth and opportunities with a focus on supply chains
- the expected long-term pattern of development between southern Cairns and Gordonvale
- providing employment opportunities for the Southern Growth Corridor

- long-term rail and road freight trends
- site level constraints and opportunities
- the capacity of infrastructure in the region.

Based on these considerations, the potential Cairns South SDA has been selected because of its strategic location, size of the available area, access to significant transport rail and road networks, proximity to employment catchments, and suitable topography. While there are environmental and social constraints, these can be managed so that, on balance, the location of the potential Cairns South SDA provides the best option to maximise opportunities, while managing impacts.





Developments near the potential Cairns South SDA

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The Edmonton Business and Industry Park

The masterplan for the new greenfield Edmonton Business and Industry Park (EBIP) is approved on land north of the potential Cairns South SDA. The EBIP is part of the Southern Growth Corridor, a corridor identified by the Queensland Government and Cairns Regional Council as a key location for managing future population growth and expansion at Edmonton, Mount Peter and Gordonvale.

While the EBIP is expected to provide land for lighter industrial and mixed use development, the Coordinator-General views that the potential Cairns South SDA would complement this area to strengthen the Cairns and Far North Queensland economy.

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Mount Peter Master Planned Area

The Mount Peter development is located on the western side of the Bruce Highway in the Southern Growth Corridor between Edmonton and Gordonvale. The majority of the area is dedicated to residential and community uses including affordable housing, a shopping centre, community facilities and parkland.

Mount Peter is being developed to support the continued population growth in the Cairns region. The potential Cairns South SDA would provide for uses that are currently not proposed in the Mount Peter area, and would assist with the long-term ongoing economic vitality of the area.

Economic

Regional overview

Cairns is a vibrant regional city that is the commercial centre of Far North Queensland and the gateway to the Asia Pacific region. It has the second largest population in northern Australia, and will continue to grow into the future.

Cairns is a popular destination of international significance because of its closeness to the Great Barrier Reef, tropical rainforests and coastal ranges. This makes it a desirable destination to live, visit or do business. Cairns is also a regional hub for industrial, educational, retail and hospitality sectors, and is supported by regionally significant infrastructure and services through its air and seaport, rail and road linkages.

Freight growth

Cairns marks the northern end of the Bruce Highway and Queensland Rail's North Coast line. These are both key arteries for incoming and outgoing freight, which is why Cairns is a key hub for industrial services and

supplies to and from Far North Queensland. Currently, large consolidated loads generally do not head beyond Cairns, with freight usually broken into smaller loads and dispatched from Cairns to hinterland areas.

Businesses rely on the freight transportation system to obtain supplies and transport products. Because of this, businesses are attracted to regions with well-placed intermodal hubs. However, there are a range of operational and locational issues currently constraining bulk freight facilities in Cairns, including the existing intermodal facilities in Cairns being limited to 650 metre long trains.

The potential Cairns South SDA would help to resolve these issues, particularly by providing an opportunity to accommodate longer trains. This would improve freight efficiency to the Cairns region, which is important as there is a modal shift expected from road to rail transport, with the growth in rail freight volume expected to be greater than the rate of overall freight growth. Access to both the Bruce Highway and the North Coast line at the potential Cairns South SDA would offer an opportunity to take advantage of these connections to establish regionally significant intermodal freight and logistics operations, warehousing, and manufacturing facilities.





Industry growth

While there is sufficient allocation of land for low impact industrial uses within the Cairns region, the supply of land for regionally significant industrial development is much more constrained. Regionally significant industrial development has specific needs because of its scale, hours of operation, and freight and traffic requirements. With continued urban expansion of the Southern Growth Corridor between Cairns and Edmonton, it is important to secure land now to meet the future demand of these industries. These future industrial uses will further diversify and strengthen the Cairns regional economy and provide employment opportunities.

There are a range of existing industry sectors that have a strong presence within the Cairns region. These include tourism related industries, agribusiness, machinery/equipment manufacturing, warehousing and logistics. Within these broad industrial sectors, key existing industries include hospitality and leisure enterprises, motor vehicle parts and transport equipment manufacturing, wholesale trade, rail and road transportation, and transportation-related storage and support services. These industry sectors will continue to drive the development of industrial land and underpin the long-term demand for industrial land.

However, there are also ‘gaps’ that represent development opportunities that would help to diversify the region’s economy. These ‘gaps’ or potential industry

sectors include food, chemical and construction material manufacturing, and heavy or civil engineering. Further development of dominant industries, or diversification into gap sectors, is likely to require larger allotments as well as good connectivity to key transport infrastructure.

The declaration of the potential Cairns South SDA would preserve the land required into the long-term, prevent encroachment from incompatible uses, and make sure that there is a location for industrial uses that might not be suitable elsewhere in the region. The potential Cairns South SDA would not only provide for existing larger scale enterprises, but would also help to remove impediments to new industries establishing in the region.

A range of other long-term regionally significant industrial development opportunities exist. Of the many priority sectors in the Queensland Government’s 10-year Road Maps and Action Plans, advanced manufacturing, biofutures, biomedical and life sciences, and defence related industries are likely to be attracted to establish in the potential Cairns South SDA. The Queensland Government would provide support to high-growth companies, industry and supply chains to help strengthen the region.

The export potential from commodities originating in Cairns gives the region a competitive advantage. To harness these opportunities, it is critical to plan now for the region’s future.

Environment, social and cultural heritage

Environment

The potential Cairns South SDA is situated within the Wet Tropics Bioregion. The site is characterised by sugar cane cultivation with limited remnant vegetation and fauna habitat. This is consistent with the remainder of the Southern Growth Corridor, which has experienced considerable development, such as agricultural uses, particularly in lowland areas.

The identified areas of ecological significance are generally associated with the vegetated areas along Mackey Creek, which extends along the eastern and southern boundary of the potential SDA. This riparian vegetation provides a potential wildlife corridor joining two World Heritage Areas: the coastal ranges of the Wet Tropics to the west and the Trinity Inlet and the Great Barrier Reef lagoon (which both form part of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area) to the east.

Should the potential SDA be declared, the current environmental values of the site would be managed as part of the preparation of the development scheme, and then as each development proceeds through an assessment process.

Social

The potential Cairns South SDA is located within a rural community predominantly based on sugar cane cultivation. A review of social values has identified a number of considerations for a potential Cairns South SDA.

Industrial areas can often be associated with off-site impacts associated with visual amenity, dust, noise and air emissions and traffic movements.

It is expected that the potential Cairns South SDA will contain considerable buffer areas where existing land uses, including cane cultivation, could continue to remain. The use of these areas, while not only retaining an agricultural setting, will help minimise potential impacts on sensitive uses in proximity to the potential SDA.

Any potential future road network would also have to take into account the local community's transport needs as the area is developed over time.

If an SDA is declared, and demand for industrial land increases over time, the loss of agricultural and horticultural production would be offset by significant employment opportunities to the Cairns region.

Cultural heritage

No sites of Indigenous cultural heritage significance have been identified in the area of the potential SDA. Notwithstanding this, any proposed development on sites with potential Indigenous cultural heritage significance would be required to be carried out in accordance with the *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003* – Duty of Care Provisions.

The Australian Heritage Place Inventory and Queensland Heritage Register identified only one record within the potential SDA – the Meringa Sugar Experiment Station. The Station was established in 1917 and is still in operation, and is located on the eastern side of the Bruce Highway, in the south-western corner of the potential Cairns South SDA.

Physical

Topography

Situated between the Great Dividing Range and the Coral Sea, the Cairns region displays abrupt topographic features that rise from around 10m to up to 1250m above sea level. The potential Cairns South SDA is located between the coastal range and the Great Dividing Range.

The topography associated with the potential SDA is low-lying and relatively flat with most of the site being less than 20m above sea level, sloping down to Wright Creek to the north and Mackey Creek to the east. Mount Peter is to the west of the potential SDA and rises steeply to a maximum height of 220m above sea level.

Flooding

The potential Cairns South SDA is located within the coastal plain which includes the Mulgrave Russell Rivers Basin. Wright Creek on the western side of the Bruce Highway is adjacent to the potential SDA, with Mackey Creek bounding the area on the east.

While there is potential for major flood events within the coastal plain, any development within the potential SDA would be located and designed to manage flood risks.

Agriculture

Sugar cane is the predominant broadacre crop of the Far North Queensland region, contributing approximately 95 per cent of the total broadacre value of commodities. The potential SDA would impact on no more than 3 per cent of the land mapped as high quality agricultural land and around 5 per cent of the land mapped as Strategic Cropping Land in the Cairns region.

While declaring the potential Cairns South SDA would impact on the availability of rural land, it is unlikely to impact the viability of the surrounding rural land. With the exception of sugarcane, there are no other large scale agricultural cropping or grazing activities in the potential SDA.

It is expected that the potential SDA would contain considerable buffer areas where existing uses, including cane production, could remain.



Infrastructure

The extent of infrastructure required to support the potential Cairns South SDA would depend on the location of development, the type and scale of targeted enterprises, and the capacity of surrounding regional infrastructure networks to cater for this industry.

Transport

One of the significant benefits of the potential SDA is its location adjacent to the Bruce Highway and the North Coast line. Being immediately adjacent to a long, straight, and relatively level section of the North Coast line would allow for long rail sidings to accommodate increased freight efficiency. This would

provide for intermodal freight services and associated industries in the Cairns region. To support long-term opportunities, the potential SDA would reserve a significant portion of its land for intermodal freight and transportation industries.

The potential Cairns South SDA would integrate with the Department of Transport and Main Road's Edmonton to Gordonvale duplication project, which is due to begin shortly. Initial stages of the development of the potential SDA would be served by the upgraded signalised Warner Road intersection. In the future, the potential SDA could be accessed from a grade-separated interchange south of Maitland Road.

The cane railway overpass at Maitland Road serves the cane areas at Mount Peter and north of Cairns, and





would be retained. The minor cane railway lines within the potential SDA may need to be adjusted over time and would be managed as development occurred.

Water supply

The water demand that the potential SDA would require (if fully-developed) has been estimated to be about 2 per cent of the current Cairns water demand. Accordingly, Cairns Regional Council's water strategy should accommodate any additional demand that future development in the potential SDA would create.

Over time, the Coordinator-General would plan for required infrastructure to support development in the potential SDA.

Wastewater systems

It is possible that the potential Cairns South SDA could connect to one of Cairns Regional Council's existing wastewater treatment plants at Edmonton or Gordonvale. Alternatively, a new independent wastewater treatment reuse solution could be developed. The Coordinator-General would consider economic, environmental and social values before selecting one of these options to treat wastewater.

Stormwater

The potential Cairns South SDA would drain naturally to the Trinity Inlet through Mackey Creek and, to a lesser extent, through Wright Creek. Any industrial development occurring within the potential SDA would aim to:

- protect the water quality of the creeks by limiting the quantity of pollutants in the stormwater
- prevent increased in-stream erosion downstream of urban areas by controlling the amount of stormwater transporting sediments and the duration of the flows
- protect in-stream ecosystems from the effects of increased runoff frequency by capturing the initial portion of runoff from impervious (or sealed) areas.

Power supply

The potential SDA is serviced by the Ergon electricity supply network. Network improvements are already proposed to service the Mount Peter Master Planned area. These improvements could be augmented and enhanced to make sure that there is a secure energy supply for the potential SDA.

Potential land uses

The Coordinator-General is considering a potential Cairns South SDA and initial concepts for how the potential SDA may develop. The actual timing of any development would be subject to market demand. The potential SDA's location adjacent to the Bruce Highway and North Coast line corridor would make it suitable for transport and logistics enterprises and industrial uses that rely heavily on freight movements.

The potential land uses identified include:

- intermodal/freight-related industry
- industry
- agriculture
- environmental management.

These land uses are described in the following sections and shown in a draft land use concept plan (Figure 3). This draft land use concept plan shows how land uses could develop in the potential SDA. If the potential SDA were to be declared, the Coordinator-General would control development to provide increased certainty to industries and the wider community over its use.

Intermodal/freight-related industry

A large portion of land immediately adjacent to the Bruce Highway and North Coast line has been identified as potentially suitable for an intermodal freight hub and freight-related industries. This area is not environmentally sensitive and is not affected by flood risk.

Locating the freight-related industry in this part of the potential SDA would allow warehouse and logistics hubs to have direct freight terminal access and would accommodate intermodal transfers to and from rail and road. Development of intermodal and freight-related industry in this location could be staged to align with capacity upgrades to the North Coast line. Enterprises

attracted to this location are likely to include those that require a large allotment and those enterprises that understand the potential efficiencies that come with increased train lengths.

Industry

An industry area could be established next to the intermodal/freight-related area to maximise transport and land use efficiencies. This land would be expected to accommodate enterprises that need separation from incompatible uses and require large allotments.

This industry area would not be near sensitive areas such as Mount Peter in the west and Mackey Creek in the east. Also, by providing a buffer area of agricultural uses, the encroachment of incompatible uses could be controlled. This area is located outside hazard areas including flood plains, storm tide and bushfire areas.

Agricultural area

It is intended that the continued productive use of the northern, eastern and southern part of the potential SDA for sugar cane cultivation would be maintained to provide buffers to sensitive uses.

Importantly, this agricultural area would provide a buffer to the rural dwellings located along Hall Road and in the vicinity of Mackey Creek.

Environmental management

Work conducted to date has identified the potential SDA's eastern boundary as being the most sensitive environmental area. Of significance is the intact remnant vegetation along Mackey Creek, as well as the fauna habitat and potential wildlife corridor that this vegetation provides.

The proximity of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and the Trinity Inlet Fish Habitat Area immediately

downstream reinforce the importance of this area, the need for it be protected and for impacts to be managed. If the potential SDA were to be declared, the Coordinator-General would manage development pressures on sensitive environmental areas through a development scheme.

The Coordinator-General acknowledges there are likely to be lawful existing uses in the area and these would be recognised.

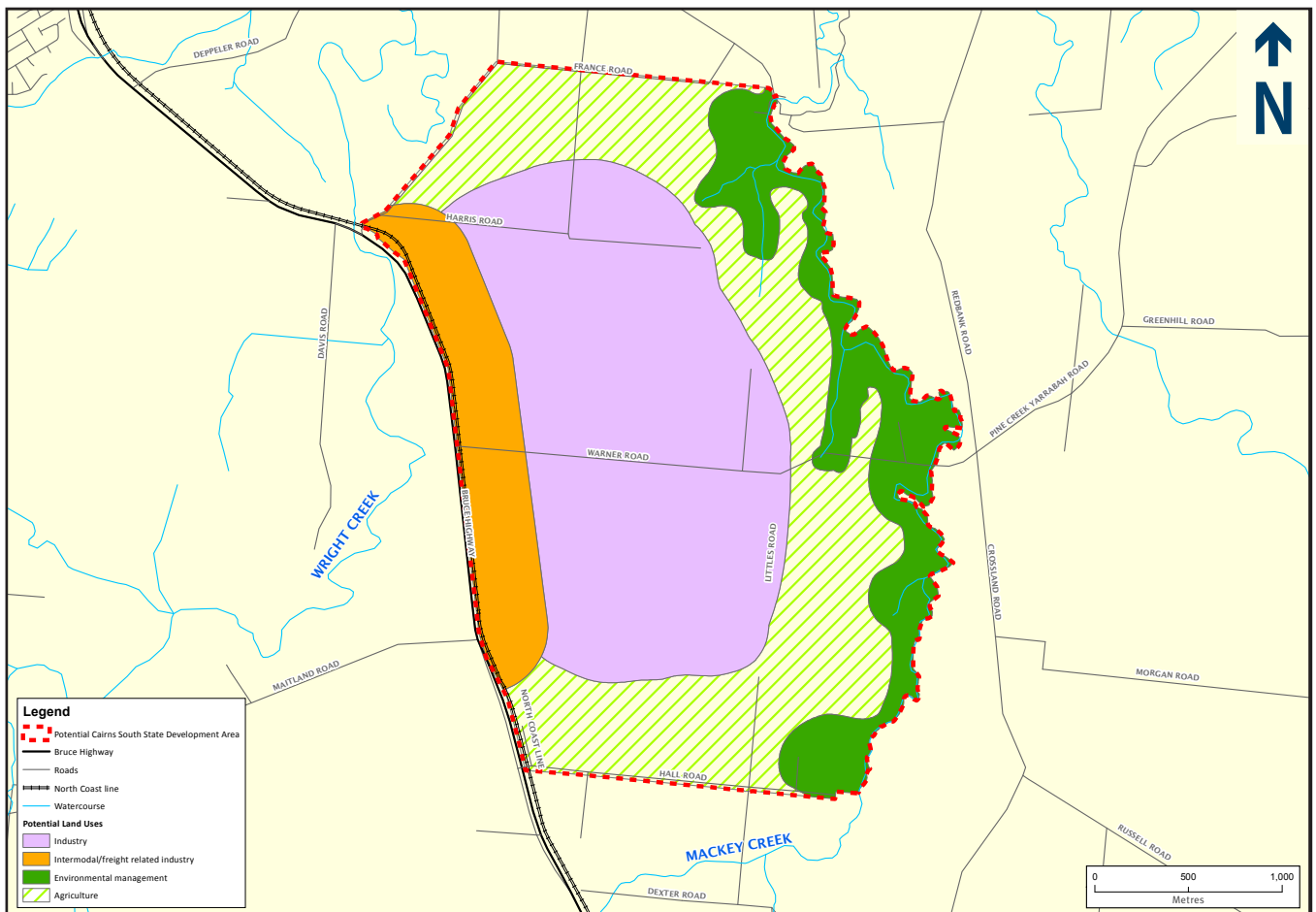


Figure 3: Land use concept plan

Have your say

The Coordinator-General is seeking feedback on the potential Cairns South SDA, including its boundary as shown on Figure 2. The Queensland Government aims to strike the right balance between the interests of stakeholders, including landholders, proponents and the community.

Your submission should:

- be made to the Coordinator-General in writing or electronically
- be received on or before the last day of the consultation period
- state the name of each person who made the submission
- clearly state the matters that you are concerned about or interested in

- provide any factual information that you have relied on, and the source of this information
- suggest measures you consider would be appropriate to inform a decision about the potential Cairns South SDA.

Feedback is invited up until Friday 11 August 2017.

You can provide your feedback by using our online submission form at **haveyoursay.dsd.qld.gov.au/coordinatorgeneral/cairns-south-sda**

Or, you can provide your submission in writing and email or post it to:

The Coordinator-General
Potential Cairns South State Development Area
Department of State Development
PO Box 15517
City East QLD 4002

Email: sdainfo@coordinatorgeneral.qld.gov.au

Development scheme

Should a decision be made to declare a Cairns South SDA, the Queensland Government would work closely with the Cairns Regional Council, the development industry, the sugar industry, landholders and the wider community to ensure stakeholder issues are explored and investigated through the preparation of a development scheme.

SDA development schemes function in a similar manner to a local government planning scheme, by outlining the types of development that are regulated and the criteria which development is assessed against.

Further information on development schemes and SDA applications and requests is available on the department's website at **www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/sda**.

