

Inaugural Queensland Coastal Conference 2007 – *Shifting Sands*

Theme: People, partnerships and place.

Title of Paper: Moreton Bay CARS

Abstract

The Moreton Bay Community Action Research Settings project (Moreton Bay CARS) is about people, partnerships and place. Moreton Bay CARS was established in 2005 as part of the conservation sectors contribution towards the Moreton Bay Marine Park Zoning Plan review in 2007 and 2008. It profiles how conservation groups are working closely with scientists, the community and others interested in the protection of wildlife, through the delivery of on-ground research programs and community events. Moreton Bay is surrounded by three of the earth's largest sand islands (to the north, east and south) and the mainland of South East Queensland (SEQ) to the west. Its biodiversity is significant and home to approximately 1400 species of marine mammals, sharks, rays, fish, birds, turtles, corals and invertebrates. The population of SEQ has increased from 2.2 million to 2.8 million people since the Moreton Bay Marine Park Zoning Plan was established in 1997. It is expected to increase to 4 million in 2025 and possibly as many as 10 million people by 2100. Yet, the current Zoning Plan sets aside only 0.5 percent of the Marine Park as protection zones for wildlife but allocates 99.5 percent for extraction of wildlife and other resources for commercial or personal gain. The conservation sector's concerns are that the level of protection afforded by the 1997 Zoning Plan does not reflect the significance of wildlife and their habitats in Moreton Bay and that the 2007 review must address this critical biodiversity conservation issue. The presentation about the Moreton Bay CARS initiative will outline a vision for wildlife habitat protection expressed by people, through partnerships around Moreton Bay.

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Introduction

Established in 2005, the Moreton Bay Community Action Research Settings (Moreton Bay CARS) project profiles a sample of the conservation sector's contribution towards the protection of the wildlife and habitats of Moreton Bay.

The Moreton Bay CARS partnership involves three conservation groups with a total membership of over 200 people. Specifically, the three groups are the:

- Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland, Bayside Branch formed in 1988
- Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland, Boondall to Tinchi Tamba Wetlands Branch (BT2WB) established in 1993
- Moreton Bay Coastcare Inc created in 2005.

Geographically, the three groups are involved in on-ground projects and community events along a 60km section of Moreton Bay. Specifically, from the southern entrance of the Pumicestone Passage (in the north part of Moreton Bay) to the mouth of the Logan River (in the south). Their community networks extending to more than 50 groups throughout the length and breadth of Moreton Bay.

Objectives

Moreton Bay Marine Park has the highest level of coastal and marine biodiversity adjacent to any capital city in Australia and quite possibly of any coastal capital city on Earth. A review of the marine mammal adjacent to global cities identified populations were 'functionally or entirely extinct in most coastal ecosystems' (Jackson, Kirby, Berger, Bjorndal, Botsford, Bourque, Bradbury, Cooke, Erlanderson, Estes, Hughes, Kidwell, Lange, Lenihan, Pandolfi, Peterson, Steneck, Tegner, and Warner, 2001), while the marine mammal population for (Brisbane's) Moreton Bay (Chilvers, Lawler, Macknight, Marsh, Noad, and Paterson, 2004) was at a cross-road.

The objective of Moreton Bay CARS partnership is to build upon the existing capacity within the conservation sector. Furthermore, to promote a common vision for marine wildlife and habitat protection during the 2007 and 2008 Moreton Bay Marine Park Zoning Plan (MBMPZP) review.

Theory

Located due east of Brisbane, Moreton Bay is the source of the receiving waters for the South East Queensland (SEQ) region which is 2.2 million hectares in area. There are 2.8 million people living in SEQ, an increase of 600 000 people in the 10 year period since the MBMPZP was established in 1997.

The Moreton Bay Marine Park is 125 km in length, 335455 hectares in area and located wholly within the Queensland Government's territorial waters. Moreton Bay's extensive biodiversity of over 1400 wildlife species reflects its significance as a coastal and marine habitat bioregion. Biogeographically, it is an overlap of the tropical waters of Queensland and the temperate waters of New South Wales.

The Moreton Bay Marine Park Strategic Plan was gazetted in 1993, while the MBMPZP was gazetted in 1997. The (current) 1997 Zoning Plan sets aside only 0.5 percent of the Marine Park as 'protection zones' for wildlife but allocates 99.5 percent for extraction of wildlife and other resources for commercial or personal gain.

In 1998, the Queensland Government signed an agreement between all States and the Northern Territory with the Commonwealth Government with the objective for a system of marine protected areas around the Australian coastline (ANZECC, 1998). Several State Governments have adopted the planning principles since then during their reviews of marine protected areas, particularly Western Australia (WA).

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is coordinating a review of the MBMPZP during 2007 and 2008 with the objective of gazetting a new (10 year) zoning plan before the current legislation expires in September 2008. The Moreton Bay convenors, who are represented on the EPA's Stakeholder Reference Group during the MBMPZP review process, have been advised by the EPA the Draft Zoning Plan will be released for public review later this year.

The Moreton Bay CARS partners have recommended to the EPA of their support the application of the ANZECC (1998) agreement planning principles of the for the MBMPZP review, as these will contribute towards the protection of Moreton Bay's wildlife and habitats. The partners have also recommended the adoption of the WA practice, that in addition to a revised Zoning Plan, a 10 year Management Plan be prepared for the period from 2010 to 2020 to compliment the zoning provisions using best practice guidelines (ANZECC, 1999).

Methodology

The purpose of the Moreton Bay CARS project is to create a C21 vision for the wildlife of Moreton Bay. A community vision for the Wildlife of Moreton Bay will give us a shared image of where we would like to be in the future (Lusis, Baltais and Singfield, 2007a). The project partners selected the Oregon model to create a vision (Ames, 2005). It has been adopted as a model for several communities around Australia, which are experiencing the effects of high population growth upon their society and upon the natural environment.

Ames (2005) states "the most successful visioning processes share five key characteristics, which are:

- Understanding the whole community
- Reflecting core community values
- Addressing emerging trends and issues
- Envisioning a preferred future
- Promoting local action".

To support the application of the Oregon model, the partnership also sought to apply best practice community engagement model to consult with other organisations during the delivery of the Moreton Bay CARS project. The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum of engagement was selected, as the most suitable framework, because these guidelines may best contribute to empowering individuals and organisations participate during the MBMPZP review.

The IAP2's (2005) five steps for public participation are:

- Gain internal commitment
- Learn from the public
- Select the level of participation
- Define process and participation objectives
- Design public participation plan.

Results

Visioning workshops

Three one-hour visioning workshops were held at Brisbane on 4 September 2005, at Redcliffe on 25 September 2005 and at the Gold Coast on 12 November 2005. Approximately 150 people contributed during these workshops. During each of the three workshops, participants:

- Created an image of the wildlife and habitats in Moreton Bay
- Described their thoughts about the wildlife of Moreton Bay.

Everyone gathered around tables of four to six people and used an A0 size map of Moreton Bay significant wildlife habitats provided by the EPA. It includes the location of bird roosts, coastal wetlands, coral and rocky reefs and seagrasses. In addition participants were provided with:

- Two fact sheets about
 - Wildlife of Moreton Bay and
 - Habitats of Moreton Bay
- Art and craft material to create images on and around Moreton Bay
- Pens and posters to write about their aspirations in prose and/or poetry in the margins of the map.

Seminars

Over a dozen seminars have been held along coastal local government areas adjacent to Moreton Bay since 2005. These events have involved representatives from more than 20 organisations contributing their expertise to ensure the events are a success.

Seminar topics about Moreton Bay's wildlife and habitats include:

- Birds
- Coral reefs
- Dolphins
- Dugong
- Invertebrates
- Marine reserves
- Sharks and rays
- Turtles
- Water quality
- Wetlands
- Whales

Survey

People who attended community seminars were invited to participate in a survey. The protection of Moreton Bay's wildlife and habitats is important to the community. The results of the survey demonstrated modest differences between average level of habitat protection recommended by respondents (67%), irrespective of their age or where they live (Lusis, Baltais and Singfield, 2007a).

On-ground projects

The conservation sector has coordinated tutorials around Moreton Bay with scientists and other experts to support the establishment of on-ground restoration projects including:

- Training for capacity building and funding opportunities at various community centres
- Coastal bushland habitats at numerous sites along the SEQ coastline
- Estuarine monitoring along Bramble Bay
- Moreton Bay Marine Park Zoning Plan review process
- Seagrass watch at more than 20 sites around Moreton Bay
- Salt-marsh monitoring at Hays Inlet

Festivals

There have also been several events coordinated in partnership (Lusis, Baltais and Singfield, 2007b) which have captured the imagination of the community, these include:

- Hays Inlet Awareness Week
- Mountains to Mangroves Festival
- World Wetlands Week

Conclusion

There are emerging attitudes about how Government Agencies and the community may work closely in addressing common issues of concern; these are (LGAQ, 2001), that:

- The community is rich with data, information and ideas
- Consultation is part of a long-term community and locality development, and it requires a range of consultation tools to contact the full range of views and ideas
- Community empowerment is a vital ingredient – for social change, for shared responsibilities, for maintaining momentum and to ensure checks and balances are working
- Consultation lays the foundation for collaboration, for partnerships to deal with the scale and complexity of the issues and for community development

The Moreton Bay Community Action Research Settings project (Moreton Bay CARS) is about people, partnerships and place. It profiles examples of how conservation groups are working closely with scientists, the community and others interested in the protection of wildlife, through the delivery of on-ground research programs and community events.

The project partners identified several techniques to build capacity within the community. The techniques provide a benefit in community campaigns for a common vision that seeks wildlife and habitat protection, and which also align with best practice community engagement principles.

Moreton Bay's future is in balance - it is the source of one of Australia's most biologically diverse waterways and is also the sink for Australia's third largest populated catchment.

The future of Moreton Bay's wildlife is dependent upon two elements

- An interested community → mobile, active and capable
- High levels of protection → a 2008 Moreton Bay Marine Park Zoning Plan supported by a visionary long term Management Plan.

The Moreton Bay CARS project has demonstrated that many people community is interested, but the majority have yet to be engaged (Lusis, Baltais and Singfield, 2007c).

The ANZECC agreements (1998 and 1999) provide the planning principles to achieve high levels habitat protection for Moreton Bay's wildlife.

Given the increases in population pressures within the catchment, the low level of protection currently afforded and the uncertainty of climate change, the future of Moreton Bay's wildlife is dependent upon sound planning principles. Therefore, the Queensland Government should apply the principles of the ANZECC agreements (1998 and 1999) between the, as they applied to the Ningaloo Reef state waters in Western Australia (Department of Conservation and Land Management, 2005).

Future

An information package will be sent to the network of over 50 conservation groups actively involved in Moreton Bay's wildlife and habitat protection. The distribution will coincide with the final stage of community engagement for the MBMPZP later this year.

The examples provided within the information package will help to:

- Encourage people to write a submission – as the democratic process for change
- Establish alliances with other groups
- Hold field trips in habitat areas
- Host forums about wildlife
- Publish information to enhance community knowledge and awareness
- Report on your on-ground projects
- Setup displays at government events
- Talk to your elected representatives.

Moreton Bay CARS project partners will host workshops and an inter-active public display during the expected public review period for the Draft MBMPZP.

The objective of the workshops will be to involve members of the conservation sector to provide leadership during the review through the application of many of the techniques. The objective of the inter-active public displays is to encourage members of the local community to participate in the review process, through the application of one or more of the techniques.

Lessons

You may only influence those who are interested. Each of the key contributors from the partnership has been involved in community campaigns about conservation issues for nearly 20 years. On a few occasions, the community engagement and planning processes for wildlife protection government initiatives has been robust and transparent, but on most occasions the processes and resultant outcomes had not been ideal (for example, the SEQ Regional Coastal Management Plan).

If Queensland Government State Agencies applied the Queensland Government Guidelines or another recognised framework for community consultation, then individuals and organisations affected by policy decisions would have an understanding of how they may become involved.

Queensland Government Agencies would benefit from using a common framework. Over time, they would contribute towards an informative and supportive society which has the capacity for adapting to change, rather than a fearful and powerless community responding to changes in a reactive manner.

Constraints

A review of annual reports by State Government Agencies involved in community consultation across SEQ identified few Agencies which apply a recognised community engagement framework or methodology.

A submission by the Moreton Bay CARS partnership and Moreton Bay Environmental Alliance (Lusis, Singfield and Dobson, 2007) recommended *'the Environmental Management Agency's community consultation framework, for the MBMPZP review, incorporate the Queensland Government's 'Community engagement in the business of government' and the International Association of Public Participation 'spectrum of engagement' guidelines'*.

A positive engagement process would be welcome by individuals and organisations involved in the productive partnerships to protect Moreton Bay's wildlife and habitats.

Acknowledgements

The Moreton Bay CARS convenors acknowledge the excellent contribution by the people who are participating in Moreton Bay wildlife and habitat protection. There are many non-government conservation groups with active members contributing to community awareness and education around the Moreton Bay coastline, they include:

- Australian Marine Conservation Society
- Australian Whale Conservation Society
- Bayside Environment Network
- Bayside Catchments Group
- Brisbane and Gold Coast Branch, Bird Observers Club of Australia
- Brisbane Region Environment Council Inc
- Friends of Peel Island
- Moreton Bay Environmental Alliance
- Moreton Island Preservation Society
- Redcliffe Environmental Forum
- Stradbroke Island Management Organisation
- Queensland Conservation Council
- Queensland Wader Study Group
- World Wildlife Fund Australia
- Youth Environment Society

The Quandamooka Land Council Aboriginal Corporation and other traditional owners have a custodial association with Moreton Bay wildlife through their sea estates.

Government funded organisations with strong networks around Moreton Bay include:

- Moreton Bay and Waterways Catchments Partnership
- South East Queensland Catchments Inc

Research institutions readily providing technical support and guidance include:

- Griffith University, Cooperative Research Centres
- Griffith University, School of Environmental Engineering
- Sunshine Coast University, School of Planning and Environment
- The University of Queensland, Moreton Bay Research Station
- The University of Queensland, School of Marine Sciences

Government organisations involved in whole of community partnerships include:

- Brisbane City Council, Boondall Wetlands Centre
- Environmental Protection Agency, Moreton Bay District office
- Gold Coast City Council, Eagleby Wetlands Community Centre
- Pine Rivers Shire Council, Osprey Environmental Centre
- Redland Shire Council, Indigiscapes Bushland Centre
- Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service

Other community members facilitating changes within their own networks include:

- Mr Michael Choi MP, State Member for Capalaba
- Helen Duckworth, Norman Creek Catchment Coordination Committee
- Cr Rae Frawley, Redcliffe City Council
- Dr John Healy, Queensland Museum
- Cr Deb Henry, Redland Shire Council
- Ms Meg Leslie, Tangalooma Wild Dolphin Resort

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Images of Moreton Bay CARS activities

VISION WORKSHOPS



Young people are very interested in a vision to protect Moreton Bay's wildlife. Photo: Moreton Bay Coastcare.

ON-GROUND ACTIVITIES



Scientists and community members monitoring fauna habitat. Photo Australian Marine Conservation Society

FESTIVALS



Uncle Des Sandy with Hays Inlet fauna characters Fred and Fiona (red legged stilts) at the official opening. Photo: SEQ Catchments

SEMINARS



Starting your campaign to protect wildlife is easy as hosting a forum. Photo: Moreton Bay Coastcare.