May 2019

Invitation to submit an Expression of Interest

Community Reference Group for the Proposed UNESCO Biosphere nomination

Expressions of interest are now open for members of the Sunshine Coast Biosphere Community Reference Group (CRG).

Sunshine Coast Council has been consulting with our community on whether the region should seek a UNESCO Biosphere designation and is now looking to finalise the nomination.

A UNESCO Biosphere is an area of natural beauty where people live and work. They are places, just like our region, where active conservation sits alongside responsible development and people living sustainably. A Biosphere is a place to celebrate people and nature.

Council’s objectives in pursuing a biosphere nomination are focussed on preserving our natural landscapes and community liveability; harmonising our economic, social and environmental objectives; and creating a legacy for our children’s future.

The CRG is an extremely important part of council’s community engagement process for this project and will provide advice to inform the nomination submitted to UNESCO.

The main purpose of the CRG will be to:
• Provide advice and critical insights to Council (as sponsor of the nomination) from the perspective of the community about the development of a nomination;
• Ensure that community views and needs are represented;
• Ensure that the community is kept well-informed throughout the development of a Sunshine Coast UNESCO Biosphere nomination; and
• Be involved in developing a ‘community statement’ (letter of support) to accompany the nomination through its endorsement process.

The CRG will consist of an independent chair, appointed by council, a councillor and 12 community members. Those members will be chosen based on a range of interest areas and demographics to ensure we form a group that is representative and inclusive of our diverse Sunshine Coast community.

Forming a Community Reference Group is a tried and tested approach and Council anticipates that positive outcomes can be achieved through this approach.

Visit council’s website www.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au for more details and to download an Expression of Interest pack.

Completed expressions of interest are due by 9am on Monday June 17.

Regards
Bill Haddrill
Acting Chief Strategy Officer
EOI submissions are due by 9 am on Monday 17 June. The EOI form and Community Reference Group Terms of Reference are available at [Have Your Say](https://www.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au). Please email your completed EOI form to: biosphere@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au

Alternatively, mail a hard copy to arrive by Monday 17 June to:
Locked Bag 72 Sunshine Coast Mail Centre QLD 4560

Copies can also be delivered by 9am Monday 17 June to the Main Reception at council’s offices in Caloundra, Maroochydore and Nambour.

Please direct any inquiries to Sonia Marshall, Strategic Policy Officer, Sustainability
Sonia.marshall@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au

Please feel free to circulate this invitation to other community members.

**CRG membership**

The standing members of the CRG will include:

- Independent Chairperson (appointed by Council)
- Project Control Group representative (Councillor)
- 12 voluntary members drawn from the following community areas:
  - Traditional Owners
  - Environmental interests
  - Business/Local economy interests
  - Community/social interests
  - Young people
  - Education sector

**CRG Proposed Meeting Dates**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>CRG meeting (proposed dates)</th>
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For further information on the Biosphere, visit Council’s website and share your thoughts via our Community Engagement portal [Have Your Say](https://www.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au) by 28 June 2019.
Sunshine Coast UNESCO Biosphere Nomination Community Reference Group

Terms of Reference – May 2019
Acknowledgements
Council wishes to thank all contributors and stakeholders involved in the development of this document.

Disclaimer
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1 Background

1.1 Decision to develop a Biosphere nomination

The Sunshine Coast is widely acknowledged as a highly desirable place to live, work and play with abundant natural resources and a unique lifestyle. Sunshine Coast Council’s vision is to be Australia’s most sustainable region – healthy, smart, creative. Council recognises that natural assets underpin and enhance liveability, and that residents living sustainably within the environment is a key to achieving the vision for the region.

A Transformational Action in Council’s Environment and Liveability Strategy (adopted in September 2017) is to increase our understanding of how people interact with the natural environment. The associated task is 21.1: *Investigate mechanisms to provide long-term protection of core environmental areas and green spaces and promote approaches to minimise the impacts of human use and activities across the region.*

To achieve the Transformational Action and task from the strategy, and environment and liveability aspirations, Council is seeking a mechanism or mechanisms that:

- attain international recognition of natural assets in the region;
- strengthen Council’s policy framework to support Council’s position on key land-use planning matters;
- support Council’s environment and liveability policies and programs;
- raise the profile of the Sunshine Coast to enhance tourism and other economic opportunities;
- attract more investment to the region and help local businesses grow;
- enhance market opportunities for agriculture, products and services;
- increase collaboration between academia, indigenous groups, community, business and government, with a focus on sustainability and environmental projects; and
- demonstrate leadership and commitment to achieve Council’s vision to be Australia’s most sustainable region – healthy, smart, creative.  

A review of national and international protection mechanisms found that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Man and the Biosphere (MAB) program was the most appropriate mechanism because it:

- provides credible and independent local, national and international recognition of the Sunshine Coast’s environmental credentials;
- aligns with and supports the implementation, monitoring and review of Council’s strategies, plans and corporate governance tools as well as environmental, social and economic aspirations for the region; and
- provides a platform for collaboration, building partnerships with key stakeholders and sharing knowledge and experience.

Investigation into the UNESCO MAB program determined that:

- a Biosphere is a non-statutory international recognition of an area, facilitates sustainable development and acknowledges interactions between people and the environments they live in;
- there are social, environmental and economic benefits for the region (such as raising the profile of the region, attracting investment and increasing collaboration between businesses and community groups) associated with Biosphere designation;
• successful existing Australian and international Biospheres have conservation areas which protect ecosystems, landscapes, species and genetic variations, buffer zones that support conservation areas, and transition zones where sustainable development occurs;
• Biospheres encourage strong community and government support, funding and resources and a focus on social, economic and environmental projects and programs;
• the UNESCO MAB program would accept a nomination from the Sunshine Coast if that were to occur; and
• the Queensland Government, Australian Government and UNESCO MAB program have annual deadlines for assessing, endorsing and accepting Biosphere nominations.

Council has provided direction to proceed with investigating the development of a Biosphere nomination for the Sunshine Coast.

The nomination will need to be endorsed by Council in October 2019 to achieve submission to UNESCO MAB by September 2020.

1.2 Purpose of the project

The purpose of this project is to develop a nomination for the designation of the Sunshine Coast as a UNESCO Man and the Biosphere, to be referred to as the Sunshine Coast UNESCO Biosphere.

1.3 Biosphere nomination objectives

The objectives for developing and submitting a Biosphere nomination for the Sunshine Coast are:

Geographic, biophysical, social and cultural design
• Identify and map the geographic boundaries of the proposed Sunshine Coast UNESCO Biosphere;
• Identify and map the geographic boundaries of zones within the proposed Sunshine Coast UNESCO Biosphere, outline land-use descriptions and define management intent within each zone, with consideration to Council’s and stakeholders’ existing land management investments;
• Identify and describe the proposed Sunshine Coast UNESCO Biosphere’s environmental, economic, social and cultural credentials, values and characteristics within the nomination.

Governance design
• Develop a governance model to support the nomination process;
• Longer term, once it is operational, develop a governance model to support ongoing management of the Sunshine Coast UNESCO Biosphere, which involves the community and meets UNESCO MAB requirements.

Implementation design
• Investigate and identify alignment of existing funding sources and resources as well as any potential shortfalls for the management of the Sunshine Coast UNESCO Biosphere once it is operational.
Community and key stakeholder engagement

- Achieve community and key stakeholder involvement, support and ownership in the development and submission of the nomination (achieve objectives of the Sunshine Coast UNESCO Biosphere nomination communications plan);
- Create a Sunshine Coast unique, non-technical language and terminology (nomenclature) for the biosphere that is easily understood by, and accessible to, the community to assist with creating a point of difference for the region and encouraging community ownership of the project.

Nomination development

- Develop a nomination that meets the UNESCO MAB criteria for designation; and
- Develop and submit a successful nomination within the timeframes (Council endorsement by October 2019 and submission to UNESCO MAB by September 2020).

1.4 Approval

This Terms of Reference was endorsed by the Council Biosphere Nomination Project Control Group in May 2019.

1.5 Responsible Council Manager

Bill Haddrill, Manager Environment and Sustainability Policy (Acting Chief Strategy Officer).

2 UNESCO Sunshine Coast Biosphere nomination Community Reference Group

2.1 Community Reference Group purpose

The purpose of the Community Reference Group (CRG) is to:
- Provide advice to Council (as sponsor of the nomination) from the perspective of the community about the development of a nomination;
- Be involved in developing a ‘community statement’ (letter of support) to accompany the advancement of the nomination through its endorsement process;
- Ensure that community views and needs are represented and that the community is kept informed throughout the development of a Sunshine Coast UNESCO Biosphere nomination;
- Assist Council to connect to the local community and stakeholders to disseminate project information;
- Provide a conduit for community feedback which informs the development of the Sunshine Coast UNESCO Biosphere nomination;
- Provide a forum for discussions with community groups and individuals regarding relevant biosphere nomination opportunities, benefits and risks;
- Inform Council decision making regarding long-term planning for management of the Sunshine Coast UNESCO Biosphere;
- Foster ownership of the nomination by key stakeholders and the community;
- Build community advocacy, understanding, trust and acceptance of the biosphere nomination;
• Ensure there is a high level of transparency across the nomination process;
• Support the co-design of communication messages and strategies to provide for effective communication and engagement with the broader public;
• Assist in managing community perception and community expectations of the project; and
• Support the stakeholder engagement goals for the nomination process.

2.2 CRG scope
The focus of the CRG will align to that of the Sunshine Coast UNESCO Biosphere nomination project scope including, but not limited to zoning, governance and management models and development of the nomination.

The CRG will not formally make decisions on behalf of Council. The CRG provides feedback and advice to be considered by Council.

The CRG will focus on the development of a Sunshine Coast UNESCO Biosphere nomination. The CRG is one part of a comprehensive engagement and communication approach for the development of the nomination.

The CRG will be complemented with a range of other communication processes such as media releases, fact sheets and regular project updates, and broader engagement activities such as community meetings.

Other key stakeholders such as adjacent local councils, and Traditional Owners may be engaged separately from time to time and as identified in the project’s Communication and Engagement Plan.

2.3 CRG membership
The standing members of the CRG include:
• Independent Chairperson
• Project Control Group representative (Councillor), and
• 12 voluntary members drawn from the following community areas:
  o Cultural
  o Traditional Owners
  o Environmental interests
  o Business/Local economy interests
  o Community/social interests
  o Young people
  o Education sector

The Mayor has Ex Officio standing of the CRG.

Officers in attendance:
• Manager Environment and Sustainability Policy/Acting Chief Strategy Officer
• Strategic Project Officer Sustainability Policy
• Other officers as relevant from time to time.
2.4 Roles and Responsibilities

2.4.1 Independent Chairperson

A Chairperson will be appointed by Council to conduct and manage meeting proceedings with the objective of ensuring the meetings are run fairly and without bias. The role of the Chairperson includes:

- Assisting Council to recruit and select CRG members;
- Ensuring individual CRG members are heard and can contribute to the process. At times the Chairperson may have to mediate the process to ensure all parties in the discussion are heard, actions are summarised and conducive working relationships are maintained;
- Conducting and managing meetings consistent with this Terms of Reference, including facilitating the flow of information and discussion;
- Ensuring meetings are focused on the Group’s purpose and scope, and on delivering clear outputs and/or outcomes;
- Supporting members and resolving any conflicts that may occur within the CRG;
- Contributing to the preparation of meeting agendas and minutes and communicating with individual members on a regular basis;
- Attending community information sessions as part of the wider public consultation for the project;
- Collating issues raised by the CRG and forwarding to the Council Project Team and Project Control Group (PCG) for a response;
- Spokesperson for media enquiries; and
- Attending Project Control Group meetings on behalf of the CRG when required.

2.4.2 Members (includes community, professional and expert members)

The CRG members should be representative of a range of key interests, positions and concerns and collectively represent a diverse cross-section of the community, including leaders from the education and community services sector, the environment sector and business and industry leaders.

Group members should work effectively and efficiently with the Chair, Council Officers and relevant consultants to achieve the best outcome for the CRG. Responsibilities include:

- Taking reasonable steps to ensure that they are knowledgeable about the purpose and outcomes of the group and the Sunshine Coast Biosphere nomination process;
- Attending and actively and constructively participating in all meetings;
- Providing informed and considered comment and advice;
- Bringing to the group’s attention any identified problems or issues within the purpose of the CRG;
- Making, supporting and adhering to any final recommendations (note that members may express a dissenting view on particular matters which should be appropriately minuted); and
- Ensuring that meeting minutes are accurate and reflect a true and correct record of proceedings.

2.4.3 Proxies

Proxies will not be permitted to attend a meeting.
2.4.4 Observers
Observers may be invited to attend a meeting, or part of a meeting, but are not able to participate in the meeting without the Chairperson's agreement.

2.4.5 Guest Presenters
The Chairperson may, from time to time, invite people to make presentations to the meeting and/or provide information, advice and opinion about a topic. These presenters do not have any other role in the meeting.

2.4.6 Council Officers
Council officers, State or Australian Government officers may attend the meeting from time to time.

2.4.7 Administrative Support
Administrative support will be provided by Council. This will extend to:
- Arranging meetings;
- Preparing and sending out agendas, minutes and other documentation;
- Maintaining up to date contact details for members;
- Carrying out or monitoring follow-up actions which arise from the business of meetings;
- Preparing deliverables from CRG actions.

2.5 Recruitment
The selection advisory panel needs to ensure that, collectively, the members of the Group represent a diverse cross section of our community.

The selection advisory panel will strive to ensure a gender balance of members.

2.5.1 Voluntary Representation
Representation on the CRG may occur by the council directly approaching community members and inviting them to become a member of the CRG or via an open Expression of Interest process.

If an EOI process is used for the appointment of voluntary representatives it will be consistent with the following process:
- The process will be coordinated by the Council Manager responsible for the Group;
- The Manager will establish a selection advisory panel with two members who have an understanding of the Group’s purpose and role of the member;
- The selection advisory panel members will include the Chairperson, Council Manager and a Councillor representative from the PCG;
- The selection process will be merit based, as inclusive as possible, and be based on the statement of claims provided by the EOI process;
- Council will maintain a database of candidates and anyone can nominate themselves by completing the EOI form and submitting it to council;
- Successful nominees will be confirmed by PCG and advised in writing of the intention to appoint them and will be asked to complete a declaration of interest.
The following criteria shall be considered when selecting voluntary members:

- **Interest**: Members should be able to demonstrate interest in one or more issues or elements relevant to the proposed project.
- **Capacity to communicate**: Ability to communicate information from the CRG to other interested stakeholders.
- **Constructive participation**: Ability to commit to working constructively and cooperatively as part of the CRG. They should agree to fulfil their role as defined in this Terms of Reference.
- **Capacity and skills to contribute**: Members should be able and willing to commit to the role and responsibilities of the CRG, and actively participate in the business of the CRG. It is desirable that members have had previous experience in a similar role.
- **Availability and flexibility**: Members should be available and willing to meet on the agreed dates from July 2019 to October 2019, at a mutually agreed time and venue.

2.6 **Tenure**

Unless otherwise determined, appointments to the CRG are only for the duration of the Sunshine Coast UNESCO Biosphere nomination project (from July 2019 to October 2019).

2.7 **Removal of Existing Members**

Council may remove existing members on request from the relevant member or the Chairperson.

2.8 **Vacancies**

Where a vacancy arises in the membership of the Group, the position may be left vacant or may be filled in accordance with a decision made by the responsible Council Manager, having regard to the length of time remaining in the project and advice of the Chairperson. As vacancies arise in the Group, nominees who have already registered an interest will be considered first by the selection panel. If no suitable nominee is available, the panel may call for additional nominations through Council’s communication channels, requiring interested parties to complete and submit the EOI form.

2.9 **No Payment**

Participation in the CRG is voluntary and no payment shall be made by Council to any standing or voluntary member for attendance or disbursements.

3 **Member Conduct**

3.1 **Code of Conduct**

Members of the CRG have a duty to discharge responsibilities entrusted by Council and the laws made under the Australian Constitution according to the highest standards of conduct.

The following Code of Conduct outlines principles that should be observed by all members of the Group, and should be read in conjunction with the *Public Sector Ethics Act (Qld) 1994*. 
• A CRG member should perform the duties of the office impartially, uninfluenced by fear or favour.
• A CRG member should be frank and honest in official dealings with colleagues and with Council.
• A CRG member should ensure their personal conduct does not reflect adversely on the reputation of Council or the nomination.
• A CRG member should demonstrate respect for fellow members, Councillors, Council employees and other members of the public.
• A CRG member should avoid situations in which any private interest, whether pecuniary or otherwise, conflicts or might reasonably be thought to conflict with their public duty.
• CRG members should not:
  o engage with the media or participate in public forums in relation to the activities of the CRG without prior agreement of the relevant Council manager and the Chairperson;
  o use information obtained in the course of their CRG duties to directly or indirectly gain an advantage for themselves or for any other person;
  o discuss or publicly disclose information gained in the course of their CRG duties without prior approval of the Council Manager;
  o solicit or accept from any person any remuneration or benefit for the discharge of their duties;
  o solicit or accept any benefit, advantage or promise of future advantage for themselves, their immediate family or any business concern or trust with which they are associated, from persons who are in, or seek to be in, any contractual or special relationship with Council;
  o accept any gift, hospitality or concessional travel offered in connection with the discharge of their duties.
• A CRG member should avoid actual or potential conflicts between their duties to the CRG and their personal interests. Members should also be aware of possible perceived conflicts of interest.
• A CRG member should comply with all laws and other Council policy, procedures and requirements.

3.2 Declarations of Conflict of Interests.
As part of the appointment process, members will be required to complete a conflict of interest declaration. Additionally, members should update their declarations of interest as they become aware of any real, perceived or potential conflicts.

Members of the CRG who have or acquire directly or indirectly a personal or pecuniary interest in a matter decided or under consideration by the CRG must as soon as reasonably practicable disclose to the Group full and accurate details of the interest.

3.3 Termination of Member’s Appointment
A member’s appointment may be terminated in writing by the relevant Council Manager for any of the following reasons:
• the term of appointment has expired;
• the member has submitted a written resignation;
the member breaches the code of conduct;
- a performance issue or behaviour documented by the Manager (in consultation with the member), has not been rectified within a reasonable or agreed timeframe.

4 CRG Operations

4.1 Meeting Frequencies and Procedures

It is expected that the Sunshine Coast UNESCO Biosphere Nomination CRG will meet every two weeks at specific milestone points of project phase. Meetings may be more frequent when required (Table 1). Meetings are expected to occur in the evenings (i.e. 6.00pm to 8.00 pm) for a period of two hours each.

Table 1: CRG meeting frequency at project milestones

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| 23 September 2019            | • Nomination finalisation                         |
| 14 October 2019              | • Nomination finalisation                         |

Administrative support will be responsible for coordinating and distributing agenda and minutes, including when and how they are distributed and finalised as well as preparing CRG deliverables. The outcomes from each meeting will be confirmed prior to the close of the meeting by the Chairperson with the CRG and recorded in the meeting minutes. Minutes will be prepared for each meeting and circulated with the following meeting’s agenda for confirmation at that meeting.

The group will seek to provide feedback and advice based on a consensus building approach. Where consensus cannot be achieved a ‘show of hands’ by the members will be required by the Chair and the outcomes documented as part of the minutes, including dissenting views.

A quorum for this group is deemed to be a majority of the members and a meeting may be cancelled if a majority of members cannot attend.

4.2 Reporting

The Chairperson of the CRG will report the advice of the CRG to the Project Control Group.
4.3 Media Statements

All media communication with the CRG will only occur via the Chairperson through media statements jointly prepared and endorsed by the Chairperson and Council’s Communications Branch.

Acronyms

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<td>MAB</td>
<td>Man and the Biosphere program</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
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