

# 10. CHAPTER TEN: SUMMARY

## 10.1 INTRODUCTION

The Social Assessment Report provides baseline social data on the SEQ RFA region. The report's objectives were to:

- provide a socio-historical context to the SEQ RFA
- identify the social catchments most likely to be affected by changes in forest use and management (TRCs)
- provide a demographic profile of the region, focusing on those indicators which imply sensitivity to change
- identify stakeholders and their issues of concern
- identify community concerns and perceived impacts of change in forest use
- identify the key variables in assessing sensitivity to change in forest use and management for both individuals and communities.

This chapter will review the key findings for each of these objectives.

## 10.2 THE SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT TO THE RFA IN SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND

The South East Queensland biogeographic region has a rapidly increasing population with expanding urban areas. The region has historically had higher than average rates of unemployment and the increasing population is, in some areas, exacerbating the problem.

Rural decline has affected many communities in the region and some communities have a narrowing economic base. The native hardwood industry has declined over the last 20 years, due in part to changes to more efficient technology, decline in available timber because of overharvesting, and conservation regimes being established.

The SEQ biogeographic region supports a wealth of flora and fauna species, though many species have been detrimentally affected by 50 percent of the region having been cleared for urbanisation and agriculture. Currently only 4.5 percent of the region has been set aside as National Park.

Queensland has a history of conflict over forests and their use and management. Consultation during the SEQ RFA reflects a willingness on the part of key stakeholders to reach a negotiated outcome that satisfies both conservation and industry aims.

## 10.3 IDENTIFYING SOCIAL CATCHMENTS

In Chapter 4, 17 Town Resource Clusters (TRCs) in the region were identified. Town Resource Clusters are social catchments which take into account (a) the location of timber processing industries with a crown hardwood allocation, (b) the location of forest contractors, (c) the location of other forest related industries including apiarists and graziers, (d) the residential location of employees, (e) the use of schools by employees, (f) employee household expenditure, (g) industry expenditure.

The TRCs represent communities which have some level of reliance on forest industry activity in the SEQ RFA region. TRCs can be used in the analysis of potential social changes in towns and communities as a consequence of a change in forest use and management. These TRCs (social catchments), give a geographical location to social groups with some level of association with forest industries.

#### **10.4 A SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF TRCS IN THE SEQ RFA REGION**

The socio-demographic profile provided in Chapter 5 looked at key indicators of sensitivity to change, social values about forest use, and the service capacity of case study areas in the region.

##### **Demographic Features**

The socio-demographic profile shows data for indicators which provide key information in identifying those TRCs which are most likely to be sensitive to changes in their local economies as a result of change in forest use and management. These indicators include:

- rates of unemployment
- rates of employment in the crown hardwood dependent timber industry
- levels of education and qualifications
- income
- housing ownership, purchasing, and rental
- age.

From the data in this social profile, several patterns were identified. The selected indicators are useful for identifying those TRCs which are most likely to be sensitive to changes in their local economies, as a result of change in forest use and management. The data shows that several TRCs exhibit the characteristics of a high level of sensitivity. These TRCs have:

- a higher than average proportion of their population who are in low income earning brackets
- have high levels of unemployment
- have lower than average proportions of houses being purchased
- a higher than average proportion of the population who left school before the age of 15
- a higher than average proportion of the population who have no qualifications,
- either ageing populations or populations in which a higher than average proportion are in non-workforce age categories.

TRCs which also have a greater than average proportion of those employed working in the timber industry are sensitive to changes in forest use. TRCs for which this is the case are Gympie, Maryborough, Blackbutt, Beaudesert, Bundaberg, and Rockhampton.

Although Mundubbera, Boonah and Killarney have most of the above-mentioned demographic features, these TRCs have unemployment rates below the regional average. Woodford also shows every feature of sensitivity to change except that there is a relatively high percentage of houses being purchased in the TRC. A relatively high percentage of houses being purchased indicates interest in investment in the area. For the Woodford TRC, this may be due to the TRC including Caboolture (the fastest growing town in Australia) and areas along the coast such as Caloundra.

Gatton is another example of a TRC which has all but two of the features which indicate a high level of sensitivity to change. Gatton TRC has a lower than average proportion of its population in non-workforce age categories and a lower than average proportion of its population who left school before 15 years of age. The regional average for the second of these indicators, is however, reasonably high, so a result slightly less than the average is still not particularly low.

Despite having a higher than average level of employment in the timber industry, and low levels of qualification and education in the population, Monto TRC has an unemployment rate well below the regional average and has a relatively youthful population.

Although Wondai TRC does not have a higher than average proportion of those employed working in the timber industry and has a lower than average level of unemployment, it has, to a moderate extent, all other features demonstrating sensitivity to change.

Cooroy has a higher than average proportion employed in the timber industry, high levels of unemployment and people in low income-brackets and an ageing population, though in general the population is more highly educated and qualified than the regional average.

Gladstone appears to be a relatively affluent TRC with higher proportions in high income earning brackets, higher levels of education and an unemployment rate below the regional average and a comparatively youthful population. Gladstone and Brisbane are the two TRCs which stand out as being comparatively affluent with populations that are better situated to cope with change than the populations of other TRCs.

### **Social Values**

Chapter 5 also includes an abridged version of a report on the social values associated with forests in SEQ. The report was based on a survey of 2000 people. The results of the survey show the population within the SEQ RFA region have high levels of concern about the management and use of native forests in Queensland (84 percent), believed that better laws were needed to regulate the use of native forests (88 percent), that protecting native forests would not threaten jobs (76 percent) and that the conservation and protection of native forests in Queensland would benefit the Queensland economy (87 percent). As might be expected given the high levels of extrinsic and intrinsic value associated with forests, 65 percent of the population also report that sometimes their beliefs about the need for employment and the need to protect native forests were in conflict.

### **Service Capacity**

Service capacity is relevant to the social profile of an area as it provides insight into the available infrastructure which may assist in a community being able to cope with change. Service capacity data also provides baseline information which can be used in impact assessment phases to analyse potential strain on services. For the purposes of the social profile, service capacity refers to the number of doctors per 1000 people, the capacity of health services and schools and the availability of public housing. The following dot points show a summary of the service capacity profile of the SEQ RFA region:

- Doctors per 1000 people ranged from 0.38 in the shire of Duaringa to 1.76 in Noosa. The average doctor ratio for the South East Queensland region was 1.09 doctors per 1,000 people
- Many towns indicated a need to continually monitor needs for medical services as part of their overall commitment to updating infrastructure
- Councils were reluctant to acknowledge spare capacity in all services
- The LGAs for each town have widely ranging public housing capacity, from a total stock of 0 in Woocoo Shire to 1045 in Maroochy
- Maryborough, Wondai, Gympie and Cooroy have public housing within the town
- All towns except Conondale have primary education facilities
- Six towns have facilities for secondary education. These were Cooroy, Maryborough, Gympie, Woodford, Wondai, and Beaudesert
- Of the 12 towns, Gympie, Maryborough and Cooroy have tertiary education facilities
- There is a general trend of diminishing levels of services being provided to rural and regional areas.

## 10.5 STAKEHOLDERS AND THEIR ISSUES OF CONCERN

The key stakeholder groups and some of their main issues in the SEQ Regional Forest Agreement are briefly described below.

### **Timber industry and employees**

These stakeholders are concerned about continued access to forests for timber production. They are concerned about the possibility of job losses in the timber industry and the flow-on effects of unemployment, including increased reliance on welfare services and a loss of community vitality as people move away to find work.

### **Conservationists**

Conservationists are concerned that the RFA needs to protect the biodiversity of the SEQ forests. They are concerned that forests be managed within a catchment framework.

### **Aboriginal people**

Aboriginal people in the SEQ RFA region are concerned that their rights as stakeholders be acknowledged as native title exists on many areas of State forest in the region. They are concerned that the traditional owners access to forests for exercising their Native Title rights be maintained so that their cultural rights and responsibilities may continue to be carried out. They are concerned that cultural heritage considerations be incorporated into sustainable management regimes and that traditional owners ought to have the responsibility for the management of cultural heritage as part of ecologically sustainable forest management.

### **Local Governments**

Local Governments are concerned about the effects on communities of potential job losses in forest industries and are concerned that Council provided services and infrastructure could be reduced if revenue bases were reduced due to job losses. They are also concerned about protecting environmental values to maximise eco-tourism potential. Local Governments are concerned about the potential difficulty of implementing weed and pest control plans if large areas of forests are made into reserves.

### **Flora collectors**

The primary concern for flora collectors is their continued ability to access state forests for resource security and business certainty. Environmental sustainability is intrinsically linked to their commercial sustainability and flora collectors are a growing employer in the SEQ region.

### **Apiarists**

Apiarists are concerned about maintaining access to forests for native flora resources. They have concern that areas allocated to forestry will be heavily logged because other forests are in reserves with forestry sites then becoming useless to apiarists.

### **Graziers**

Some graziers utilise State forests for cattle grazing and for these stakeholders, continued access is their key concern.

### **Farm foresters**

Farm foresters are concerned that it be recognised that investing in farm forestry requires a view to long-term returns because of the time that it takes for trees to grow. Assured right of harvest and economic incentives are required to make farm forestry a viable industry.

### **Tourism and recreationalists**

Tourism operators are concerned that the RFA process considers the need to increase the supply of National Park type areas in the SEQ region for tourists to visit.

For recreation, a wider range of activities are presently allowable in State forests than in National Parks, including horse riding, mountain bike riding, and four wheel driving. Access to forests is significant for people undertaking these activities.

### **Mining industry**

The key concerns for the mining industry are maintaining access for mineral exploration and mining, particularly in areas of moderate to high prospectivity, and maintaining economically viable mines whilst respecting conservation and cultural values of any given area.

### **Forest dependent communities**

Communities with an association with forests are concerned about job losses, a lack of job security and uncertain work conditions due to instability in forest industries. They are concerned about a decline in community vitality as a result of job losses in forest industries as well as local asset depreciation.

## **10.6 COMMUNITY ISSUES OF CONCERN**

General issues raised in workshops and focus groups included a high concern about job losses in the timber industry, the viability of the timber industry and timber dependent communities in the future, the need for effective management of State forests, socio-economic hardship in rural areas and youth having little incentive to stay in their home towns. In general there was recognition by all community workshop participants, of the importance of the timber industry to the overall vitality of their local community.

Visions for the futures of these communities, held by workshop participants, included a sustainable timber industry utilising farm forestry and plantations, balanced with the protection of the environment and biodiversity. Other visions for towns' futures included a small potential for tourism benefits and improvement in service provision to their areas. However, most participants felt that tourism was not going to replace the timber industry in their area as a new local industry base.

Workshop participants were generally concerned about the possible impacts of a reduction in the availability of State forest resources in terms of the job losses in the forest user sectors and the flow-on impacts on the town's economy. Most participants recognised that there is a need to manage forests in an ecologically sustainable manner to ensure the long-term viability of the timber industry and timber dependent communities.

### **Case Study Areas**

#### **Maryborough**

Maryborough makes up part of the Maryborough TRC which has all the demographic features which indicate that the area is sensitive to changes in forest use. The TRC has; a higher than average percentage of the population in low income earning brackets, high levels of unemployment, a lower than average proportions of houses being purchased, higher than average proportions of the population who left school before the age of 15, higher than average proportions of the population who have no qualifications, and a higher than average proportion of the workforce in non-workforce age categories. Maryborough TRC also has a higher than average proportion of the population employed in the timber industry.

The services available in Maryborough include a public and private hospital, primary and secondary schools, significant public housing and aged care hostels. There is also a Meals on Wheels service and minimal youth services.

The Maryborough City Council has a pro-development vision and aims to promote Maryborough as a modern, progressive city, combining historic charm with modern facilities.

At the Maryborough community workshop, participants identified positively with the area, though concern was expressed about conservatism in the area and poverty levels. Participants' visions for the future included a certain future for forest industries and a major agro forestry industry. There was concern about the possible negative effects of job losses as a result of the RFA, however, it was also thought that the RFA would lead to a better planned and more sustainable timber industry.

### **Wondai**

Wondai forms part of the Wondai TRC which exhibits many of the demographic features which indicate sensitivity to change in forest use. The TRC has; a higher than average percentage of the population in low income earning brackets, a lower than average proportions of houses being purchased, higher than average proportions of the population who left school before the age of 15, higher than average proportions of the population who have no qualifications, and a higher than average proportion of the workforce in non-workforce age categories.

Wondai has one small public hospital and there are 11 primary schools in the shire. High school education facilities are available to year 10 level only. There is a limited number of public housing dwellings in the shire and some facilities for aged care.

The Wondai Shire Council has a pro-development vision for the Shire. The community vision is focused on retaining a rural residential lifestyle whilst encouraging some urban growth and increases to industry and commercial activities.

The Wondai community mobilised in response to the SEQ RFA process to form the Wondai Regional Forest Agreement Committee (WRFAC). The Wondai community members identified the fundamental role of forestry to both the history and the future vision of the community. The community is particularly concerned that access to SF12 should be maintained.

### **Eudlo**

Eudlo falls into the Woodford TRC which has many of the demographic features which indicate sensitivity to change in forest use. The TRC has; a higher than average percentage of the population in low income earning brackets, high levels of unemployment, higher than average proportions of the population who left school before the age of 15, higher than average proportions of the population who have no qualifications, and a higher than average proportion of the workforce in non-workforce age categories.

There is one primary school in the town a community hall and a mobile library service. The nearest medical services are at Palmwoods and the nearest hospital is at Maroochydore. There is no public housing in the town.

Eudlo falls into Maroochy Shire and the Shire Council has a vision for the future of rural communities such as Eudlo which includes the maintenance of the cohesive character of the community. The Council has a strong emphasis on conservation of the natural environment. The strategies of the Shire council aim towards preserving the village charm of small towns in the region such as Eudlo.

### **Gympie**

Gympie makes up part of the Gympie TRC which has all the demographic features which indicate that the area is sensitive to changes in forest use. The TRC has; a higher than average percentage of the population in low income earning brackets, high levels of unemployment, a lower than average proportions of houses being purchased, higher than average proportions of the population who left school before the age of 15,

higher than average proportions of the population who have no qualifications, and a higher than average proportion of the workforce in non-workforce age categories. Gympie TRC also has a higher than average proportion of the population employed in the timber industry.

The services available in Gympie include a 128 bed public hospital, numerous primary schools, two State high schools and a campus of Cooloola-Sunshine institute of TAFE. There are 562 public housing dwellings and aged care hostels, nursing homes, Meals on Wheels and Red Cross services.

The Cooloola Shire Council has a vision for the future of increased industrial development for Gympie, and seeks also to enhance the traditional aspects of the town for tourism purposes, focusing on the towns historical links to gold mining and the timber industry.

Participants at the Gympie community workshop identified positively with the rural lifestyle of Gympie with its proximity to urban amenities and beautiful natural environment. Visions for the future of the town included a viable and sustainable timber industry with a strong interest in farm forestry as well as protecting high conservation value forests and promoting tourism in the area. Key concerns for workshop participants included job losses in the timber industry as a result of the RFA and the possible flow-on effects of this to the rest of the community.

### **Beaudesert**

Beaudesert makes up part of the Beaudesert TRC which has all the demographic features which indicate that the area is sensitive to changes in forest use. The TRC has; a higher than average percentage of the population in low income earning brackets, high levels of unemployment, a lower than average proportions of houses being purchased, higher than average proportions of the population who left school before the age of 15, higher than average proportions of the population who have no qualifications, and a higher than average proportion of the workforce in non-workforce age categories. Beaudesert TRC also has a higher than average proportion of the population employed in the timber industry.

The services available in Beaudesert include a 38 bed public hospital, a State primary and a State high school and 123 public housing dwellings. There is also an aged care home and a retirement village in the town.

The Beaudesert Shire Council has a vision for the future of the shire which involves encouraging industry whilst promoting orderly population growth. The conservation of the natural local environment for scenic, ecological and recreational values is also high on the agenda for the Shire Council.

### **Conondale**

Conondale falls into the Woodford TRC which has many of the demographic features which indicate sensitivity to change in forest use. The TRC has; a higher than average percentage of the population in low income earning brackets, high levels of unemployment, higher than average proportions of the population who left school before the age of 15, higher than average proportions of the population who have no qualifications, and a higher than average proportion of the workforce in non-workforce age categories.

There are no services available in the town of Conondale itself with the nearest hospital being at Maroochydore and the nearest schools in Maleny.

Conondale falls into Caloundra Shire and the vision held by the Shire Council for the town includes promoting the town's forestry heritage and protecting the conservation values of the surrounding natural environment as well as encouraging farm forestry.

## Woodford

Woodford makes up part of the Woodford TRC which has many of the demographic features which indicate sensitivity to change in forest use. The TRC has; a higher than average percentage of the population in low income earning brackets, high levels of unemployment, higher than average proportions of the population who left school before the age of 15, higher than average proportions of the population who have no qualifications, and a higher than average proportion of the workforce in non-workforce age categories.

The services available in Woodford include a primary school and a high school to year nine as well as bus services linking the town to Caboolture. There are no other services in the town itself with the nearest hospital being at Caboolture.

Woodford's rural industries of forestry and grazing are continuing but in decline, with the largest employer in the town now being the Woodford Correctional Centre.

Participants at the Woodford community workshop were very positive about the community cohesion in Woodford and the strong family ties and values as well as the relaxed lifestyle. Their vision for the future included finding a balance between the environment and the economic needs of the community. They saw industry diversification, including forest based tourism and value adding as the key to the town's economic future. Participants expressed concern about the possibility that the RFA may lead to job losses and have negative flow-on effects to the whole community.

## Builyan/Many Peaks

Builyan/Many Peaks falls into the Gladstone TRC which has relatively few of the demographic features which indicate sensitivity to change in forest use. However, Builyan/Many Peaks is one of only two places within the TRC which has an association with forest industries and will likely bare the brunt of any changes in forest use within the TRC.

There are limited services available in Builyan/Many Peaks where there is a public health service and one small primary school. There is some public housing available and other services and facilities are available in Gladstone.

Builyan/Many Peaks is a part of Calliope Shire, whose council's vision for the future of the shire include encouraging industrial expansion in the area whilst promoting the tourism potential of the area.

Participants at the Builyan/Many Peaks community workshop enjoyed the country lifestyle and the natural environment of the area but were concerned about the narrow employment base and lack of advancement opportunities. They were concerned that loss of jobs in the timber industry may have negative flow-on effects for the whole community, but that the RFA may force a diversification of local industry. Their visions for the future include a sustainable timber industry and encouraging low impact tourism.

## Dingo

Dingo is a part of Rockhampton TRC TRC which has all the demographic features which indicate that the area is sensitive to changes in forest use. The TRC has; a higher than average percentage of the population in low income earning brackets, high levels of unemployment, a lower than average proportions of houses being purchased, higher than average proportions of the population who left school before the age of 15, higher than average proportions of the population who have no qualifications, and a higher than average proportion of the workforce in non-workforce age categories. Rockhampton TRC also has a higher than average proportion of the population employed in the timber industry.

The services available in Dingo include a medical clinic, a small primary school and a regional lifeline service. There is no public housing, however, some housing is provided by the logging industry for sawmill workers.

Dingo is in Duaringa Shire whose council's vision included encouraging the expansion of pastoral and agricultural industries in the shire and ensuring the controlled development of coal mining in Blackwater. The town is also located close to National Park with tourism potential.

### **Linville**

Linville falls into the Blackbutt TRC which has all the demographic features which indicate that the area is sensitive to changes in forest use. The TRC has; a higher than average percentage of the population in low income earning brackets, high levels of unemployment, a lower than average proportions of houses being purchased, higher than average proportions of the population who left school before the age of 15, higher than average proportions of the population who have no qualifications, and a higher than average proportion of the workforce in non-workforce age categories. Blackbutt TRC also has a higher than average proportion of the population employed in the timber industry.

Linville has one small primary school and a bus service which links its residents to neighbouring service centres. The nearest medical facilities are at Kilcoy and the nearest high school is at Toogoolawah.

Linville is in Esk Shire and the visions of the shire council for the town include maintaining its rural village character.

Participants at the Linville community workshops were very concerned about the continued viability of their township should the RFA cause job losses. Participants identified positively with the town's rural setting and had a vision for the town's future which included Linville being a showcase for sustainable rural land management with prospects for tourism and with a greater diversity of industries in the area.

### **Cooroy**

Cooroy is a part of Cooroy TRC which has some of the demographic features which indicate sensitivity to changes in forest use. Cooroy has a higher than average proportion employed in the timber industry, high levels of unemployment and people in low income-brackets and an ageing population, though in general the population is more highly educated and qualified than the regional average.

Services available in Cooroy include a private hospital a small state primary school, a Blue Nursing service, a youth program and a domestic violence counselling service. There is also a limited number of public housing dwellings in the town.

Cooroy is in Noosa Shire and the Shire council's vision for the future of the town includes protecting its attractive but fragile country town character. The council aims to promote orderly residential and light industrial growth without compromising its character which is seen to be under threat from rapid increases in population.

The participants at the Cooroy community workshop felt very positively about the rural atmosphere of the town and the diverse and relaxed community and good family environment. However, participants were concerned about the rate of population growth and the lack of employment opportunities. Their visions for the future included upgrading rural education facilities and improving work opportunities. They also saw a future in value adding to timber products, in private plantations and more sustainable forest management. Concerns about possible outcomes of the RFA included job losses and being forced to use non-renewable timber substitutes.

## Brooweena

Brooweena is a part of the Maryborough TRC which has all the demographic features which indicate that the area is sensitive to changes in forest use. The TRC has; a higher than average percentage of the population in low income earning brackets, high levels of unemployment, a lower than average proportions of houses being purchased, higher than average proportions of the population who left school before the age of 15, higher than average proportions of the population who have no qualifications, and a higher than average proportion of the workforce in non-workforce age categories. Maryborough TRC also has a higher than average proportion of the population employed in the timber industry.

There are no services in Brooweena itself.

Brooweena is in Woocoo Shire and some of the council's vision for the area include fostering economic development and employment opportunities. The shire prides itself on its good solid farming tradition, principally cattle grazing, dairy farming and growing sugar cane, and also recognises the need for a modern and progressive attitude for the future.

### 10.7 KEY VARIABLES IN ASSESSING SENSITIVITY TO CHANGE IN FOREST USE AND MANAGEMENT

For communities within the region, the key variables which indicate a high level of sensitivity to changes in forest use and management include:

- having a narrow economic base with some reliance on forest industries
- having the demographic features which indicate sensitivity to change.

However, from the work undertaken in *SE 5.1 Post Impact Studies Analysis*, we know that it is difficult to identify the effects of a single government policy decision. Policy decisions tend to have ambient rather than direct effects on whole communities and the effects on a community are highly dependent on the particular context of that specific community.

Community workshops identified potential impacts of changes in forest use and management including unemployment, uncertainty and general community decline.

For individuals who are affected by changes in forest use and management as a result of RFAs, we know that those who suffer the worst effects are those who:

- are aged over 50
- have children and high financial obligations
- have a narrow range of work experiences and educational qualifications.

The impacts, on an individual level may include:

- anger;
- stress and anxiety; and
- fear and uncertainty about the future.

## 10.8 WHERE DOES THE INFORMATION GO FROM HERE?

The social assessment data collected during the CRA phase will be used in the “integration and option development phase” of the RFA. Potentially, some of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data collected throughout the CRA phase may also form part of the series of social indices which is being developed for use during the development of draft RFA options. The social indexes cover issues such as sensitivity to change, and the level of resource dependence.

In addition, some of the baseline data collected throughout the assessment phase will also be used to evaluate the impacts of the draft RFA. This baseline data will be used to assist in predicting the type and range of potential social impacts which may occur from a change on forest use and management.

## 10.9 CONCLUSION

From the data presented in this report, and the findings of the four social assessment projects, we have:

- developed an understanding of the social context of the SEQ region
- identified where forest users are located within the region
- identified stakeholders and their issues of concern
- identified the key variables in assessing sensitivity to change in forest use and management.

The SEQ RFA Social Assessment Overview Report has identified and highlighted the needs and concerns of forest dependent communities. Any future process will ensure that, to as great an extent as possible, agreed management strategies will be developed for any changes in forest use or management as an outcome of the RFA.

