

Rural and Rural Residential Land Review

Mackay Region Rural Land

The Mackay region has a strong agricultural history associated with sugar production. The region provides productive rural land resources and rural residential lifestyle options.

Following council amalgamation, the absence of a consistent strategic direction for rural land development resulted in a fragmented and un-coordinated settlement pattern outside the urban area.

Striking a balance between the preservation of agricultural land and rural residential development is a key planning challenge. The draft Mackay Region Planning Scheme (MRPS) should provide clear direction to the development of rural and rural residential land that reflects council policy and stakeholder interests.

Current planning scheme

There are three planning schemes in effect in the Mackay region (Mackay City, Mirani Shire Plan and Sarina Shire). In the Rural Residential Zone, Mirani and Mackay schemes have a one hectare lot size.

Sarina allows a 4,000m² lot size where reticulated water is provided or 8,000m² where not provided.

The draft MRPS aligns with the rural residential provisions of the Mirani and Mackay schemes, leaving aside the variations in the Sarina scheme. A minimum lot size of one hectare is provided in the Rural Residential Zone and 100 hectares in the Rural Zone.

Public Consultation

During public consultation of the draft MRPS, council received 79 submissions in relation to rural and rural residential land. Five submissions called for a study into rural and rural residential land while other submissions dealt with the agricultural overlay, allotment size, zoning requests and consistency between planning instruments.

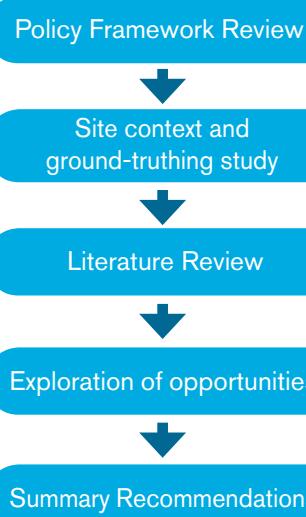
Land Review

In response to submissions, the Rural and Rural Residential Land Review (the review) was undertaken to assess the current policy direction in the draft MRPS, to comprehensively consider stakeholder concerns and to explore potential amendments to the draft MRPS.

The methodology considered:

- Local and state policy frameworks;
- verification of existing rural and rural residential site conditions;
- a literature review of planning and technical reports on rural land use;
- alternative policy approaches;
- key recommendations.

The methodology is illustrated below:



State Planning Policy

The single State Planning Policy (SPP) was released in July 2014 and includes a supporting '*Guideline for State Interest Agriculture July 2014*' to assist Councils in plan making. The SPP recognises the contribution of agriculture to the State's economy, which underpins

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the State Strategy for Agriculture 2040. The SPP adopts the Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries mapping to identify the most productive agricultural land and introduces new terminology as Agricultural Land Class A & B (instead of Good Quality Agricultural Land, previously used). The review considered the new SPP and supporting guidelines.

What is the current situation in the Rural and Rural Residential zone?

The review included a stocktake of current *Rural Residential* zoned areas. Thirty-two rural residential areas were profiled by locality; physical attributes; history of zoning changes and approvals; land constraints and available infrastructure.

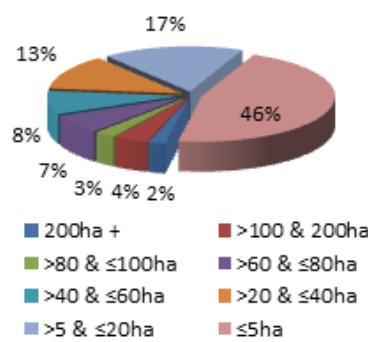
The review found that:

- The Rural Residential Zone is spatially scattered in location and size;
- Multiple small clusters occur with no clear planning merit;
- The bulk of allotments comply with lot size provisions with 52% less than one hectare in size;
- Lots are poorly serviced with significant land constraints; and
- 639 lots are vacant (no dwelling).

The stocktake of *Rural* zoned land revealed a similar pattern of highly fragmented land.

The median lot size in the Rural Zone is only 7ha and almost 50% of the total 10,929 lots are under 5ha. The average lot size in the Rural Zone is 46ha. The predominant land use is a dwelling house.

Rural Lots by Size:



Supply and demand

Rural residential lots were approved at 73 lots per year in the past 11 years. There is future capacity in the Rural Residential Zone for a further 300 subdivided lots. This represents nine years of supply if the 35 large lot registrations per year continue.

The supply of land for rural lifestyle options found:

- 639 lots are currently vacant in the rural residential zone;
- 1,092 lots are vacant in the rural zone;
- 54% of approvals for rural residential development have not been acted upon; and
- the 24 townships (outside of Mackay, Sarina, Walkerston, Marian and Mirani) can provide an additional 1,200 lots.

The findings indicate that the region has significant supply of land for rural lifestyle options.

A conversion rate of only 46% of permits over 11 years to registered allotments indicates a lack of demand. The oversupply of rural residential options removes the need to release additional rural residential land in the draft Planning Scheme.

Recommendations to draft planning scheme

Key recommendations are:

- amend the strategic framework to only reflect rural residential areas where further development is encouraged;
- increase the rural residential node at Sarina Beach;
- maintain minimum lot sizes of 100ha in the Rural Zone;
- clarify the Rural Zone Code and the Reconfiguration of a Lot Code provisions for boundary realignment to support the policy position.

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