

## R-CM 4: Biodiversity Connectivity Strategy

Collaboratively prepare and implement a Biodiversity Connectivity Strategy incorporating latest science on climate change impacts in the region.

This strategy delivers on these Regional Themes	Biodiversity	Biosecurity	Coastal Systems	Sustainable Industries	Water
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
This strategy delivers on these Strategic Outcomes	Supportive, policies, plans and regulations	Collaborative, adaptive planning and action	Traditional Owner Benefits	Sustained and diverse resourcing	Community stewardship, values and action
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Outcome	<p>A collaborative, evidence-based Biodiversity Connectivity Strategy results in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Regional agreement about where the priorities are for investment for the purposes of biodiversity connectivity.</li> <li>▪ Strategic investment for biodiversity connectivity directed to those priorities.</li> <li>▪ Relevant plans and policies (e.g. planning schemes, State-wide Biodiversity Strategy) at all levels reflecting the priorities from this Region-wide Connectivity Strategy.</li> </ul>
Justification	<p>Research focused on biodiversity connectivity (some of which builds in climate impacts and better understanding of the future “climate space”) needs to be brought together in a region-wide, agreed, connectivity strategy (north/south as well as lowlands/highlands), to maximise the outcomes from connectivity investment and to inform plans and policies that can have either a positive or perverse impact on biodiversity resilience. Critical to this process is a robust discussion about connectivity – what is it and how do we achieve it. The discussion must be future focused. It will be important that a strategy takes into consideration multiple outcomes for multiple species, focusing on landscape resilience.</p>
Key steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Bring together key scientists that have been working on biodiversity prioritisation (in particular spatially-based) to identify the mechanisms required for integrating the data in order to spatially prioritise for biodiversity connectivity. Critical is to integrate the most recent work on climate change and the implications and adaptation opportunities for biodiversity.</li> <li>2) Based on this information, work collaboratively (probably through a structured workshop process) to interpret the value-added spatial products, build in the social component (e.g. where do we have willing communities and landholders) and agree on the priority locations for corridors, and actions that need to be taken to progress these corridors).</li> <li>3) Prepare a clear communication product for wider distribution to government and other investors.</li> <li>4) Prepare and implement a monitoring, evaluation and review plan for the Biodiversity Connectivity Strategy, to ensure it is adaptive and incorporates new information on a regular basis.</li> </ol>

- ✓ The Wet Tropics Plan provides an opportunity to bring people together, but also to present the resulting information as a key component of the plan.
- ✓ A Biodiversity Charter will provide the overarching logic for a connectivity strategy, mapping out the agreed approach towards addressing current and projected future threats to biodiversity.
- ✗ It is likely that given future climate change projections, there will have to be a change in thinking about biodiversity, and this can be difficult for people who have been working hard to restore ecosystems to the way they were. The messages are that we need to be building in novel ecosystems and planning for the 50 year future, rather than attempting to restore ecosystems to their pre-European state. This is next to impossible now, and will become even more unrealistic as climate conditions change.
- ✗ There is so much to do, and generally limited resources, and so prioritising is a critical but very difficult task. It is likely that any connectivity strategy will require far more resources than are available to implement, and prioritising within that strategy will be important but challenging.