



FNQROC Annual Report 2011

Prepared for the Annual General Meeting on 8 August 2011

This report will give an overview of the financial and operational activities undertaken by FNQROC on behalf of member councils during the period 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2011.



Far North Queensland Regional Organisation Of Councils

FNQROC's Vision

Regional prosperity through interactive and collaborative planning and advocacy.

FNQROC's Mission

Our Mission is to foster cooperation and resource sharing between councils and effectively advocate on agreed regional positions and priorities.

FNQROC's Core Values

- **Autonomy** to act within the constraints of our systems of Government,
- **Integrity** in the performance of their functions,
- **Responsiveness** to the needs of the local community,
- **Accountability to stakeholders** – electors, ratepayers, other spheres of Government,
- **Equity**; and
- **Respect** the rights of individual councils to have their own opinions.

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CHAIR'S EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Once again, it has been a big year for FNQROC with numerous programs being run to support councils and their staff. We are now fully resourced to implement our operational plan and I look forward to the achievements which can be gained, particularly from our new procurement arm.

One of the benefits of FNQROC as we grow is that we have staff with the core expertise to react relatively quickly to events. With regional expertise in Engineering, Natural Asset Management, Planning, Sustainability and Procurement I can see the proactive work which is starting to occur. A summary of the work undertaken in the last 2010/2011 period:

1. The near completion of this region's first TNQ Regional Economic Plan.
2. FNQROC is the lead agency coordinating a regional digital economy strategy and submission to NBN Co. for early roll out of high speed broadband.
3. We welcomed Croydon Shire Council as a full member of FNQROC.
4. Monthly Newsletters have kept everyone informed of FNQROC's activities.
5. The development of a national first: Integrated Biodiversity Assessment and Planning Framework which needed cross-departmental involvement of Asset Managers, Planners, Natural Asset Managers and Engineers. This is a feat in itself!
6. The development of a regional Biodiversity Code to complement the Integrated Biodiversity Assessment and Planning Framework.
7. The commencement of our Regional Procurement Program.
8. The Regional Development Manual continues to be a valuable tool used by councils and industries to ensure the standard of our donated assets do not compromise the ratepayer in the future.
9. Our Regional Road Group continues to be a leader within Queensland.
10. The Natural Asset Management Advisory Committee has worked with regional, state and national stakeholders to further strengthen the planning and advisory structure which supports day to day operations of councils across invasive species management and landscape repair.
11. The development of a strategy to manage councils' risk in a carbon economy (to be endorsed in August 2011) with a complementary Regional Sustainability Policy.

I congratulate the council and FNQROC staff involved in these projects which help build and strengthen our ability to service our constituents.



Cr Tom Gilmore
CHAIR



FNQROC Core Operation Activities

To function effectively, FNQROC has a core requirement to:

- Manage and implement the agenda, minutes and actions from board meetings (six meetings per year);
- Investigate/implement activities as directed by FNQROC board between meetings;
- Provide regional responses to government and LGAQ on request of FNQROC Mayors, CEOs or technical committees;
- Prepare media releases as needed;
- Represent FNQROC at external meetings (i.e. Regional Managers Coordination Network, Regional Plan Implementation Group, Road Alliance, Qld Regional Organisation of Council meetings, select Terrain NRM activities, Advance Cairns etc);
- Investigate and implement regional training opportunities as requested by technical committees;
- Manage the review, public consultation and editing of Regional Development Manual;
- Investigate identified opportunities for regional collaboration;
- Manage FNQROC Staff and provide guidance on programs, and
- Manage finances and funding sources of FNQROC

The benefits to councils include:

- An organisation by councils for councils to manage regional activities and funding. With out this, councils would need to undertake activities individually thus increasing council costs. Such activities include or have included:
 - ✓ The Regional Development Manual which guides all civil engineering work within the region. The estimated cost to each council to review the manual individually is \$30,000 per year.
 - ✓ Regional Road Group - \$2.7 million in funding per year
 - ✓ Regional Pest Management Plan – accredited by the state for all councils in the region. Savings to councils is estimated at \$7,500 per year per council.
- An opportunity to work collaboratively with other councils in a structured manner to advocate for local communities as one region.
- The opportunity to utilise the knowledge and expertise of council staff within the region to assist in making/recommending decisions, devising policy, and providing guidance through technical working group networks. There are currently nine technical working groups with an additional 10 sub groups with focused activities.

Staffing: Darlene Irvine, Executive Officer 1.0 FTE and Sandra McCormack, Administration Officer 0.734 FTE

Budget: \$138,502

Overview of 2010/2011

Local Laws

The councils have been working collaboratively on local laws to work through some of the difficulties with the new models. It is expected that all councils will be ready for the December deadline.

Community Plan

Although there was no financial or resource commitment to this group, staff still endeavoured to meet to discuss their progress and any issues. They all presented to the Regional Managers Coordination Network earlier in the financial year to gain State Government Agency buy-in.

National Broadband Network / Digital Economy Strategy

FNQROC has taken the lead agency role in developing a Regional Digital Economy Strategy to entice NBN Co. to deliver high speed broadband to this region. The introduction of high speed broadband will open our economy to many new businesses not previously viable due to limited speeds. High speed broadband will also assist existing businesses expand their capabilities and access new markets.

We have:

- Sourced data from councils and are in the final stages of collection.
- Engaged David Ives from Mach Technologies to provide advice and network with NBN Co.
- Engaged Rutten Technologies to develop 10 case studies within the region to highlight the benefits of high speed broadband for our businesses and communities.
- Arranged for NBN Co. and the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI) to give two information presentations – Broadband for Breakfast (Cairns) and Broadband for Lunch (Atherton). These were well attended with 130 people in Cairns and 40 people in Atherton. (Note: in Brisbane usually approximately 40 people attend these presentations).
- Obtained funding from DEEDI to undertake a survey of businesses to understand the training which will be required.
- Collected information from businesses which could assist with the roll out of high speed broadband. This is to ensure that where possible local businesses are utilised and benefit from the work which will need to be done in the future. This information will also help to identify the skill gaps within the region and develop training to fill them.

Tropical Innovation Awards

The Executive Officer and Administration Officer have both been working with the Steering Committee for the Tropical Innovation Awards. With more than 50 applicants from across the region (and the tropical zone) FNQROC has agreed to sponsor the 2011 Awards. All FNQROC staff will also be assisting on the night of the awards.

TNQ Regional Economic Plan

After putting the call out for our peak regional organisations to meet, put our egos aside and pull together to work on developing a regional economic plan, it is exciting to see it is near completion. While each council will have its core needs, there is no doubt this region needs to work collaboratively for us all to grow. To do this, we need to be speaking as one, we need to be able to identify and prioritise what we require to lift and strengthen our economy. Development of the TNQREP is the first step in doing this, the second relies on the continued support and review to ensure it is meeting our needs and developing a robust economy.



FNQROC Board on Grassy Hill, Cooktown

Website

The website www.fnqroc.qld.gov.au is currently hosted by Cairns Regional Council. All FNQROC documents, assets, agendas, minutes, newsletters and contacts can be found on the FNQROC website.

Newsletters

Each month the Administration Support does an excellent job in reminding FNQROC staff for the stories and updates for our monthly newsletters. These newsletters are designed to

keep everyone informed of the work we are doing and we welcome any feedback. We

have sought quotes for the revamp of the website, and the introduction of a more streamlined e-newsletter.

Financials

All financial transactions are recorded in Quickbooks. This program is updated to the latest version each year.

Meetings

The Administrative Support attends as many of the various meetings as possible to take minutes and to keep up to date with what each group is dealing with. All meeting venues, catering, agendas, IT etc are organised, as well as accommodation and transport where applicable.

Correspondence

The Administration Support prepares and records incoming and outgoing correspondence. These records are kept within Cairns Regional Council's data management system. Details of outgoing and incoming correspondence is included in the board agendas.



FNQROC Board meeting, Cooktown

FNQROC Procurement

Program Introduction

The role of Procurement Coordinator within FNQROC was established in July 2010 and was filled in February 2011. This program is jointly funded by the Road Alliance Group and member councils.

Councils are (in some instances):

- Under continual pressure to do more with less.
- Competing against each other for product/services - driving costs up and pushing out delivery timelines.
- Provided with substandard service due to a lack of suppliers in the region. This could be due to volumes or contract terms.

The FNQROC Board saw an opportunity to work collaboratively to minimise these risks and requested the program to further scope this initiative, to identify and provide technical advice on progression forward (with an emphasis on “low hanging fruit”) and what are the inhibitors for joint purchasing/contracts/resource sharing.

The initial priorities the board identified at a working group were:

- Water chemicals – (Sodium Hypochlorite, Liquid Alum).
- Fuel.
- Pipes and stormwater supplies.
- Fleet vehicle purchasing.
- Sewerage sludge (opportunity for new player or regional facility for sludge, we are the only ones who produce it and it could be mixed with our excess green waste).
- Pavement stabiliser (difficulty in accessing – if council/region purchases one, MOU or commitment for usage).
- Policy for regional procurement.



It is envisaged that this collaborative approach will produce benefits through economies of scale and create an inducement for regional investment.

Progress to date:

Although the year has been challenging in dealing with many preconceived thoughts regarding this role, as the year has progressed through Technical Committee meetings and networking, council staff have begun to understand and appreciate and acknowledge the role of FNQROC Procurement. It is about partnership development and providing mechanisms to facilitate closer more sustained collaboration between member councils on identified projects with minimal outlay (‘more with less’).

A benefit of the current economic downturn has been in maintaining current pricing or delivering reduced pricing structures as compared to the helter skelter price rises pre GFC. Through the tendering process we hope to establish long-term savings in this area however we are also realising comparable or even greater savings with indirect benefits.

Tangible signs of indirect benefits:

- Shared costs for professional advice in production of up to date legal documentation and tendering advice.
- Providing member councils the optimum benefit of going to tender and showing industry we are committed to achieving the very best outcomes.
- Effective and transparent tender evaluation process.
- Ability to assist in regional economic development through the offer of long-term contracts.
- Unified voice with State Government agencies ie. Local Buy - consistent message from the region with regards to the training and services required.
- Additional development of inter-council networks, not only for procurement activities.
- Sharing of professional expertise through staff forums.
- Enhanced Identification of total cost of product procurement and use ie product ordering, storage, invoice administration through forums.
- Inter-council product and process benchmarking.
- Identification of potential cost savings to supplier (with flow on to member councils) through a structured regional product delivery system incorporating all areas as opposed to councils competing against each other.
- Conduit for suppliers to make submissions, streamline systems and create efficiencies as a result.
- Reduction of “Red Tape” with a reduced tendering system, standard contract and standard product across region.

It is hoped through collaborative contracts and collaborative negotiations to not only reduce overall product expenditure but also reduce employee hours spent in connection with product (ordering, delivery, acceptance, accounts payable). We feel once we are able to report these savings we will be better placed to deliver greater value to our stakeholders into the future.

Current projects:

- Procurement framework - guidelines, documentation.
- Establishment of procurement network - Technical Committees (procurement, water treatment).
- Contract template in conjunction with MacDonnells Law.
- Sodium Hypochlorite (chemical for the treatment of drinking water).
- Liquid Alum (chemical for the treatment of waste water).



Future Initiatives:

Establishment of Procurement Tab for FNQROC website

Through this, FNQROC would then be in position to create:

- Forums to facilitate expertise and resource sharing.
- Common registers (providing members an additional resource to manage suppliers and service delivery) this will assist with future tendering and annual reviews.
- Tender services that will allow for greater probity.

- Additional outlet for local organisations to search for future business opportunities.

With the establishment of this service, activities and support we foresee this will be the platform for future benefits as well as becoming a recognised regional conduit for procurement partnerships with councils.

Sludge

(by product of waste water treatment) Currently some member councils are faced with large transport and dumping costs currently researching what opportunities for councils to collectively be proactive environmentally, sustainable and cost effective.

Feedback

Through the Technical Committee meetings council staff feedback have been positive with additional projects being mentioned for investigation and members finding the round-table meetings an excellent forum for discussion/problem solving.

Industry feedback to date has been very encouraging they are heartened by the potential offer of collective long term contracts, as this will provide them with a stable business base into the future, allowing them to explore business cases for capital expenditure and potential cost saving outcomes.

I hope to be able to present more tangible benefits through the FNQROC newsletter as we progress through 2012.

Staffing: Steven Cosatto, Regional Procurement Coordinator 1.0FTE

Budget: \$126,000

FNQ Regional Road Group

Membership

Cairns Regional Council
Cassowary Coast Regional Council
Cook Shire Council
Tablelands Regional Council
Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council
Department of Transport and Main Roads (Far North Region)

Executive

RRG Chair	Cr Peter Scott (Cook)
RRG Deputy Chair	Cr Margaret Cochrane (Cairns)
RRG Secretariat	Darlene Irvine (FNQROC)
Technical Committee Chair	Colin Moore (TMR)
Technical Committee Deputy Chair	Natasha Murray (Cairns) to 16 February 2011 Tony Lickiss (Cook) from 17 February 2011
Technical Coordinator	Gerard Read (FNQROC)

Far North Queensland Regional Road Group (FNQRRG) was formed in 2002 under the framework of the Queensland Roads Alliance between the Department of Transport and Main Roads and the Local Government Association of Queensland. There are 19 Regional Road Groups in Queensland. There are four key functions under the Roads Alliance:

- Program Development
- Asset Management
- Joint Purchasing and Resource Sharing
- Road Safety

The RRG comprises elected members (generally the Mayor) from each Council and the Regional Director of DTMR. The Technical Committee comprises senior staff (in the engineering field) from each Council and DTMR. Both the RRG and Technical Committee meet regularly and separately with recommendations from the Technical Committee put to the RRG for ratification.

FNQRRG effectively manages the Local Roads of Regional Significance (LRRS) network which comprises higher order Council roads and lower order TMR roads. A large portion of State Government Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme (TIDS) funding is channelled to the LRRS network each year to improve the standard and condition of these roads. This TIDS funding is generally matched by Council funding on a 50/50 basis. An additional \$2.15m annually has been allocated to FNQRRG since the inception of the Roads Alliance in 2002. The LRRS network in FNQ totals 1,430km in length, with an approximate 50/50 split between sealed and unsealed roads. FNQRRG is also responsible for the improvement of asset data and asset management planning for the LRRS network. The Roads Alliance has developed a “minimum common data set” of inventory and condition attributes for roads.

FNQRRG is also responsible for the investigation and implementation of potential joint purchasing and resource sharing initiatives and programs for the members.

Road Safety is only a recently added function of the Roads Alliance and at this stage FNQRRG is focussed on complementing existing road safety strategies established in the region.

In general, the underlying governing principle of the Roads Alliance is to continuously improve the LRRS network for the travelling public, and improve the knowledge, decision making, capability and efficiency of the members. FNQRRG has an established “Capability Agreement and Action Plan” in place which guides this process.

Progress to date

FNQRRG is considered one of the leading 19 RRGs in the state and has had a progressive and “exciting” year again. Cyclone Yasi imposed its will in early 2011 to completely upheave and test the resolve of our members and their communities. Priorities changed literally overnight and members are still very much focussed on the restoration and recovery of all public infrastructure, not least our road network.



The new Owens Creek Bridge on Myola Road, Kuranda

Operational

- The RRG met four (4) times - Cairns (3) and Cooktown (1).
- The Technical Committee met six (6) times - Cairns (4), Innisfail and Wujal Wujal.
- All meetings were well attended by members and representatives from RoadTek and the Roads Alliance Project Team based in Brisbane.
- Member representatives did not change significantly for both the RRG and Technical Committee.
- Regular and planned meetings ensure FNQRRG operations are a “business-as-usual” activity for members and not neglected. This has been a significant cultural shift during the life of FNQRRG.
- The “Capability Agreement and Action Plan” was reviewed at each Technical Committee meeting.

Program Development

- Away from the natural disasters, the highlight of the year has been construction of the new Jubilee Bridge in Innisfail at a cost of \$20 million which has been jointly funded by Cassowary Coast Regional Council and the State Government through a Special TIDS allocation. The bridge approaches (roundabouts) have been funded through LRRS TIDS and Council. It is expected to open in August 2011.
- Other significant projects completed were:
 - ✓ Sealing of the road to Grassy Hill in Cooktown.
 - ✓ Sealing of a 5km section of Battlecamp Road north of Cooktown.
 - ✓ Floodway upgrades at Coopers & Mason Creeks on the Cape Tribulation to Bloomfield Road.
 - ✓ Construction of a concrete pavement at the “switchback” on the Cape Tribulation to Bloomfield Road, just south of Wujal Wujal.
 - ✓ Replacement (including raising, widening to two lanes and pedestrian lane) of the Owens Creek Bridge on Myola Road at Kuranda.
- An additional \$2.9 million funding was secured through the Regional Safety and Development Program (RSDP) for the following two significant projects:
 - ✓ Construction of a crossing at Woobadda Creek on the Cape Tribulation to Bloomfield Road.
 - ✓ Progressive upgrades over the next four (4) years to Ootann Road.

- The current works program was monitored and reviewed at each Technical Committee meeting.
- The prolonged wet season heavily impacted delivery of the current works program. TIDS expenditure was 62% of budget.
- The five year forward works program (2011/12 to 2015/16) was again fully prioritised and developed on a regional basis (not a fixed allocation to each member) using the Roads Alliance “Project Prioritisation Tool”.
- A review of the LRRS network was undertaken with the following key links added:
 - ✓ Draper Street, Cairns (Comport Street to Cook Street)
 - ✓ Cook Street, Cairns (Draper Street to Aumuller Street)
 - ✓ Aumuller Street, Cairns (Mulgrave Road to Hoare Street)
 - ✓ Hoare Street, Cairns (Aumuller Street to Pease Street)
 - ✓ Butler Street, Tully (Bruce Highway to Morris Street)
 - ✓ Morris Street, Tully (Butler Street to Bryant Street)
 - ✓ Bryant Street, Tully (Morris Street to Dean Road)



Jubilee Bridge under construction, Innisfail

Asset Management & Road Safety



Woobadda Creek (as it is now)

- Level 2 inspections were undertaken on all bridges and major culverts across the LRRS network. Approximately 50% of these structures were found to be in a condition state of “Poor” or worse. This obviously has had an impact on the forward works program.
- A program to rectify the high risk areas determined from the NetRISK safety assessment undertaken in earlier years commenced and will continue through 2011/12 and beyond. A progress review is undertaken at each Technical Committee meeting.

- A separate Regional Asset Management Strategy Technical Committee met five (5) times in Cairns. This Committee also included Hinchinbrook Shire Council.
- All Councils have completed or are close to completion in the development of their own Asset Management Plans in accordance with the Local Government Act and Regulations.
- Regional levels of service frameworks were debated and established for not only roads, bridges and footpaths, but parks and sporting facilities, natural open spaces and buildings.
- Development of a regional “unit rate” database and associated calculation methodology for valuation purposes commenced and will continue through 2011/12 and beyond.

Joint Purchasing & Resource Sharing

- The most significant aspect was the engagement of the FNQROC Regional Procurement Coordinator in line with Stage 1 recommendations from the ABM Study carried out in 2009/10.

- \$63,000 (50% of cost) external funding from the Roads Alliance “Statewide Capability Development Fund” was obtained for this initiative.
- Joint purchasing initiatives are outlined in the Regional Procurement Coordinator’s report.
- The Technical Committee investigated the joint purchase of an Underbridge Inspection Unit and Pavement Stabilisation Plant and resolved not to proceed with this initiative.

Future Initiatives

- The Roads Alliance recently released a TIDS Funding circular which is encouraging flexibility in the use of the funding, in particular with “value adding” to projects approved as part of the record NDRRA program.
- Consequently the works program will be extensively reviewed once NDRRA approvals are received.
- Currently the works program budget for 2011/12 is as follows including carryovers from 2010/11:
 - ✓ LRRS TIDS - \$8.7m (\$4.6m in funding)
 - ✓ Non LRRS TIDS – \$1.68m (\$840k in funding)
 - ✓ RSDP – \$2.3m (\$1.6m in funding)
 - ✓ SafeSt – \$450k (\$250k in funding)
- In respect of the RSDP program, negotiations are in progress with the Wet Tropics Management Authority regarding design of the Woobadda Creek crossing and work on Ootann Road will commence in the near future.
- It is proposed to use the new Roads Alliance “Investment Strategy Tool” to review the Regional Investment Strategy and develop a Regional Asset Management Plan for the LRRS Network.
- FNQRRG will be actively pursuing the procurement of a Bridge Management System in 2011/12.
- A standing invitation for all Technical Committee meetings has been extended to TMR Road Safety representatives.
- A review of each Cairns, Cassowary Coast and Tablelands’ “Integrated Transport Plans” and will be undertaken to ensure the LRRS network and works programs are appropriate for future needs. \$12,500 (50% of cost) external funding from the Roads Alliance “Statewide Capability Development Fund” has been obtained for this.



Ootann Road (typical as is now)

Staffing: Gerard Read, Regional Infrastructure Coordinator 1.0FTE
Budget: \$137,235

Regional Planning and Sustainability

Program Introduction

Both the Planning and Sustainability agendas have been running for some time with FNQROC. Planning has long been an area of interest, but really hit the radar of FNQROC back in 2006 in the inception days of the FNQ Regional Plan. This was when the FNQROC Planners Group met for the first time and has continued to meet on a regular basis since.

Sustainability crept into the spotlight late in 2008 when the regions councils signed up to the ICLEI Cities for Climate Protection Program. In 2009, funding for the CCP Program discontinued. It was decided at this point that the regional CCP forum should continue but under the banner of Sustainability – as the agenda had by now expanded beyond Climate Change alone.

Given the increasing workload associated with both of these important areas, the role of the Regional Planning and Sustainability Coordinator was created and filled in October 2010.

The key Sustainability Activities to be undertaken:

- Sharing of resources, knowledge and expertise across the region reduces duplication of effort and advances positive technical, operational and planning outcomes.
- Work collaboratively to support the objectives of Sustainable TNQ within the region.
- Work to develop proposal/business plan around sustainability education in preparation for future funding opportunities.
- Investigate funding opportunities from Caring for Our Country or other funding sources.
- Progress through the stages of the Energy review noting that councils can opt in or out for any of these stages.
- Finalise Local Climate Change Action Plan.
- Finalise Regional Climate Change Action Plan.
- Prioritise and support councils in implementation of actions.
- Support councils in implementing actions within the Reef Guardian Councils Action Plans.
- Identify other regional sustainability issues for possible action (eg composting municipal waste).

Key Planning Activities to be undertaken:

- Positioning FNQ to be offered the same opportunities for involvement in the development of guidelines, policies and legislation that is available to SEQ councils.
- Sharing of knowledge and expertise (including interpretation of legislation and State Planning Policies)
- Sharing content development for Planning Schemes
- Work collaboratively to resolve issues with implementing FNQ2031 within new planning schemes.

Benefits to councils:

- Sustainability is a term that is being touted from the state and federal governments with the community. The field of ‘sustainability’ is relatively new in councils and this group aims to share the knowledge and expertise held within the region.
- This group has links to Sustainable TNQ (developed by community members with expertise from around the region – membership includes individuals, businesses, chambers of commerce, non government organisations, local government and some state agencies)

- Local Climate Change Action Plan (Audit of emissions and action plan developed) undertaken as a collective saved each council approximately \$10,000
- Stage one of the Energy Infrastructure projects has identified over \$250,000 in energy costs across the region per year and \$15,000 in ambulance levies across the region per year.
- Further stages of the Energy Infrastructure project will also save councils funds (Return on investment is 1 – 7 years for these stages).
- Direct consultation, representation and advocacy with key state planning departments in regard to the implementation of relevant legislation
- The provision of a collective voice for the technical and operational expertise within the region adds weight to communication to state and national bodies and ensures local issues are represented and tabled;
- Sharing of resources, knowledge and expertise across the region reduces duplication of effort and advances positive technical, operational and planning outcomes.

Progress to date

Planning

The last part of 2010 and the first quarter of 2011 were consumed largely by planning issues. The launch of version 2 of the Queensland Planning Provisions (QPP), as well as the release of the draft Regional Plan Implementation Guidelines for Biodiversity and Waterways in late 2010 kept the regions planners very busy.

A training day was held by DLGP for the QPP which was a result of a previous request by the FNQROC Planners Group. This training was well attended by both local and state government planners and helped to clarify many of the issues planners were grappling with in the planning scheme development process.

The Regional Plan Implementation Guidelines generated considerable interest from the regions LG planners. Most Council's had made submissions on the draft documents and were keen to discuss further with policy writers from Brisbane DERM office. Several meetings were arranged with DERM officials where Planners were able to question and provide input into the revision of the guidelines. These draft documents are yet to be finalised.

The highlight of the planning agenda in 2011 was the Natural Resource Management Decision Support Tool training in Mission Beach. The project, funded by LGAQ, was something that had long been in the pipeline for this region, but hadn't eventuated due to conflicting events.

In February, a Project Reference Group chaired by FNQROC was set up. The groups mandate was to guide the development of the Decision Support Tool and consisted of representatives from local government, DLGP, DERM, Terrain NRM, Northern Gulf NRM, WTMA and GBRMPA. This group was also heavily involved in designing the program for the DST training course.



On-site training exercise, Mission Beach



NRM Decision support Tool Training, Mission Beach

The aim of the training was to inform planners on how they can better incorporate targets of the regional NRM Plan into their planning frameworks. The training took place over 2 days in Mission Beach and incorporated a large component of practical application of the DST. This was to ensure that planners could return to their workplaces feeling confident that they would be able to apply the tool.

Feedback from the training has overall been very positive with most attendees indicating they gained a lot from the program. In addition to expanding skill sets of the planners, it was an excellent chance to come together socially. Given the training was attended by staff from local and state governments, NRM bodies and private enterprise, it proved a useful networking opportunity for all.

Sustainability



William McCormack Place (II) - 6 star building in Cairns

Whilst I was busy wading (or drowning!) in the world of planning, Linda Williams was contracted by FNQROC to draft the Regional Greenhouse Gas Inventory and Mitigation Action Plan, as well as the Council specific GHG plans for Cook, Cassowary Coast and Hinchinbrook. Linda facilitated workshops with these 3 councils and drafted Mitigation action plans for each of them based on the outcomes of the workshop.

The Sustainability Group has continued to meet every 3 months to discuss the many issues that face local government in their sustainability efforts. This year we have aimed to keep the meetings interactive and educational, keeping the group up to date with the latest goings-on around the region.

So far we have undertaken a detailed tour of the William McCormack Place II building – a Queensland Government model in energy and water efficiency. We also attended the opening of the Gordonvale Community Hall which had undergone a retrofit to make it more energy efficient.



William McCormack Place (II)

Current projects

Planning

Another planning matter that raised its head in the last part of 2010 and is still being dealt with is the Areas of Ecological Significance (AES) mapping under the FNQ Regional Plan 2031. Councils are required to incorporate the regional AES mapping and associated policies as they prepare their new Planning schemes.

Tablelands Regional Council was first to highlight this issue through the FNQROC Planners Forum. The detailed interpretation of the mapping required to implement in a planning scheme was not possible given the scale that it had been prepared for in the Regional Plan.

Calling on a previously used GIS application that analysed Council's Natural Assets, the Integrated Biodiversity Assessment and Planning Framework (IBAPF) was born. This project aims to fine tune the AES mapping to a scale that is usable by local government planners.

Whilst the Natural Asset Management Coordinator has been crunching out the bulk of the work in the GIS system, I have been assisting through coordinating state government input into the process. This is critical as ultimately it will be the state government that signs off on a final planning scheme. It has also been an important part of the process to include Cairns Regional Council and Cassowary Coast council planners who will be confronting the same problem as their planning schemes progress. Terrain NRM has been a key stakeholder in assisting with the framework development. Having the necessary regional biodiversity and GIS knowledge that Terrain holds was critical to the success of the program.

Now that the mapping is nearing completion, a planning code that will complement the overlay is being drafted. I have been assisting TRC planners in the drafting of this document over recent months.

Sustainability

Given the work completed by Linda Williams at the end of 2010 on the regional GHG inventory and Mitigation Plan, I have now finalised this document and referred it to the FNQROC board for endorsement. To complement this action plan and complete the broader policy framework for FNQROC, a Regional Sustainability Policy has also been drafted and submitted to the board for endorsement.

These documents set some clear direction and outline the short, medium and long term responsibilities of the Sustainability Coordinator's role. The Regional Sustainability Policy is equally important in establishing the broader policy direction of FNQROC in this important area of concern.

Future Initiatives

Planning

Given the success of the Decision Support Tool training held in Mission Beach, I would like to make some kind of training/professional development program an annual event for the planners. I consider so much was gained from this opportunity and would like to continue to foster knowledge sharing and good relationships between all stakeholders involved in planning in FNQ.

In the meantime, we will continue to support local governments as they prepare their planning schemes, and aim to keep abreast of the raft of state government planning reforms as they occur. This involves ongoing engagement with state government agencies, and I consider that relationship to be very healthy.

The Planning Group continues to meet every 2 months and as usual provides a useful forum for the local government planners to share concerns and experience. The next meeting of the group coincides with the PIA Regional Planning Symposium. Local government have secured the afternoon session of this event to present on the approaches and challenges they are facing in preparing their new planning schemes. We consider this will be a great opportunity for the planners to show case the great work they are doing and communicate to industry the challenges they are facing. FNQROC have generously sponsored the afternoon tea for this event.

Sustainability

The Regional GHG Mitigation Action Plan identified many roles for the Sustainability Coordinator. Much of this work will be supported through the Sustainability Group, however, some of the specific actions that will require attention in the coming year include:

1. Develop a model to benchmark building and facilities energy consumption and GHG emissions based on floor space and occupants;
2. Work with Ergon Energy in investigating and progressing trials of any new energy & cost efficient lighting technologies (luminaries);
3. Support LAWMAC and Councils to develop holistic waste management and minimisation initiatives;
4. Investigate options for management and reuse of sewerage sludge.

The quest for ongoing funding to support many of these initiatives will be a focus of this role. I suspect with the introduction of the carbon tax in the coming financial year, funding opportunities may be available for us to investigate. We will continue to take a collaborative approach in these efforts, not just with local government, but with all relevant stakeholders to manage the risk of a carbon economy on local governments.

Staffing: Daniela Gambotto, Regional Planning and Sustainability Coordinator 0.6FTE

Budget: \$64,150

Natural Asset Management

Program Introduction

The Natural Asset Management program is a co-funded arrangement between Terrain NRM and the FNQROC. The role of Natural Asset Management Coordinator is a full time position hosted by Cairns Regional Council human resources with office space and facilities provided by Tablelands Regional Council.

The role represents the interests of Local Government across operations related to the natural environment including invasive plants and animals, landscape repair and restoration and biodiversity conservation. The role of the coordinator is one of representation, advocacy, strategic planning, facilitation, communication. Delivering partnerships and collaborations that adds value and creates efficiencies to Local Government operations in managing natural assets is a key deliverable.

The Natural Asset Management Advisory Committee (NAMAC) guides the technical aspects of the role. The NAMAC consists of nominated representatives from member councils (two per council), Terrain NRM and DEEDI and so reflects the memorandum of understanding entered into by the State Government (DEEDI), Natural Resource Management groups (RGC) and Local Government (LGAQ) at a regional level. The committee meets quarterly on a rotational basis hosted by each Local Government in turn. The NAMAC coincides with the FNQ Pest Advisory Forum (FNQPAC) which communicates the latest in management, science and policy to the NAMAC and the community.

Key Activities to be undertaken:

- Core representative group for regional Natural Asset Management and Natural Resource Management business;
- Guide, advise, facilitate and communicate regional directions and partnerships in the delivery of Local government pest management and landscape repair;
- Facilitate a specialist advisory group to guide regional partnerships, coordination and co-investment in vertebrate pest management

- Facilitate a specialist advisory group to guide regional investment and resourcing of technical, planning and policy direction in landscape repair and resilience;
- Development and delivery of spatially explicit resource allocation and cost benefit analysis for landscape repair and pest management;
- Seek and foster research (State, Federal and University) and NRM investment and alignment with Local Government priorities and operations;
- Implementation group to guide delivery of stage two of Cross Regional Hymenachne Management Strategy (FNQ and Burdekin) by determining the priorities providing advice to National WONS program and strategic planning and partnerships between stakeholders
- Ongoing delivery and development of the regional mapping project and data share agreement including 1km grid pest mapping and maintenance of interactive web portal for community access; and
- Deliver the Regional Pest Management Strategy and assist in the delivery of Local Government annual implementation/action plans.

Benefits to councils:

- Direct consultation, representation and advocacy with key state departments (e.g. DEEDI) in regard to the implementation of relevant legislation (Land Protection Pest & Stock Route Management Act 2002);
- Provision of a single point of contact for regional consultation, negotiation, and representation and two way communication with key stakeholders and partners from NGO, state and national partners and stakeholders;
- Direct representation and collaboration with Weeds of National Significance National boards particularly Hymenachne and Pond Apple. This has not been available previously to any council (unless a National Board member);
- Ownership and authorship of key strategic planning documents and strategies to ensure local representation and interpretation of state and national legislation and policy. e.g. – dedicated species plans for Pond Apple and Hymenachne;
- Bi-annual taskforce operations ‘on ground’. This has resulted in insurmountable landscapes being cleared of pest weeds saving councils \$1000’s per year. Two examples to date include the works undertaken in Hinchinbrook Shire Council after the floods early 2009 and the Hiptage taskforce undertaken in Cairns Regional Council in October 2009;
- The provision of a collective voice for the technical and operational expertise within the region adds weight to communication to state and national bodies and ensures local issues are represented and tabled;
- FNQROC has an accredited Regional Pest Management Plan that is regularly reviewed saving councils approximately \$7,500 per year as they do not have to undertake this statutory process;
- Sharing of resources, knowledge and expertise across the region reduces duplication of effort and advances positive technical, operational and planning outcomes;
- Direct input into the Wet Tropics NRM plan ‘Sustaining the Wet Tropics’. Opportunities to influence the strategies within this plan significantly increased through this regional collaboration;
- Competitive funding has seen many projects compromised. This group is working collaboratively to identify and prioritise agreed strategic areas within the region to focus our attentions for competitive funding grants and future environmental offsets; and
- Through collaborative work, FNQROC has assisted to secure over \$2mil in additional funds over the last 3 years. These resources have funded on ground works, strategic planning and regional asset procurement.

Progress to date

The natural asset management coordination role evolved out of the regional pest management officer position which was initiated in the region in 2005. During the tenure of the pest management officer key regional initiatives such as the Weed Spread Prevention Strategy, mobile wash down units and regional communication tools were developed. Importantly during the transition to amalgamated councils the role built on and galvanised the regional partnerships that continue to this day. As a result of the 2009 revision of the Regional Pest Management Strategy the then FNQ Pest Management Advisory Committee decreed to become the FNQ Natural Asset Management Committee in order to reflect the dual role of local government management natural area units in both pest management as well as landscape restoration.

Current projects

The natural asset management coordinator role is involved in many projects and initiatives across the region as well as representing your interests within local, regional, state and national advisory structures. The key projects and advisory structures are summarised below. A more detailed snapshot of an individual group of projects is provided in the project profile.

Leading the delivery of

- Natural Asset Management Planning Project
- Interactive Biodiversity Assessment and Planning Framework
- Regional Pest Management Strategy
- Regional Weed Spread Prevention Strategy
- Regional Pest Mapping Project

Assisting in the delivery of

- Wujal Wujal Natural Asset Planning Project
- TRC Biodiversity Conservation Overlays for Planning Scheme
- CRC Biodiversity Conservation Strategy
- Local Pest Management Plans

Facilitates:

- FNQ Natural Asset Management Advisory Committee,
- Regional Vertebrate Pest Working Group,
- Regional Landscape Repair and Resilience Working Group,
- Pond Apple Working Group

Representation on:

- Northern Queensland Pest Fish Advisory Group,
- National Pond Apple Management Group,
- Weeds Society Queensland,
- Terrestrial Biodiversity Advisory Group,
- National Tropical Weeds Management Committee,
- Tropical Weeds Operational Committee,
- Far Northern Region Interdepartmental Committee for Bushfires,
- Natural Resources and Environment Sub – Committee.

Project profile

FNQROC biodiversity and conservation planning and visualisation using Community Viz™ and the Interactive Biodiversity Assessment & Planning Framework (IBAPF).

Project outline

The Interactive Biodiversity Assessment and Planning Framework (IBAPF) is a process for collation, query, analysis and production of GIS products that utilises a range of off-the-shelf tools, developed specifically for this region. The framework was developed initially to assist in analysing values and determining priorities within local government owned and managed parcels in the FNQ Natural Asset Management Project.

What is it?

The framework is a spatial data analysis, query and collation sequence that prepares a range of data products available for immediate consumption, or to be further utilised within the ArcGIS based scenario-based planning software package Community Viz. The products of the framework are essentially map products but are amenable to further detailed statistical and spatial analysis in wide range of contexts e.g. spatially explicit resource planning, optimisation, risk analysis and systematic prioritisation.

Scenario-based planning, prioritisation and visualisation

The real strength of the framework is its intended utility within the scenario-based ArcGIS extension, Community Viz. The application allows for the interactive query and visualisation of values, threats and relationships of multiple values on a landscape scale. Complex interactions can be explored in a dynamic and interactive environment that allows the investigation and visualisation of scenarios through a series of weightings and suitability queries and filters. Steps one to three in the illustration show the process of creating a simple scenario that encompasses multiple threats and values to indicate where investment of further investigation of a certain issues might take place.

Applications

The IBAPF has been applied to assist in the development of biodiversity conservation goals and supporting overlays for the revision of Tablelands Regional Council Planning Scheme which is approaching draft. Works are underway with Cairns Regional Council in applying and further developing the reporting and statistical capabilities of the framework and linking back to the natural asset planning framework also under development in their pending Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.

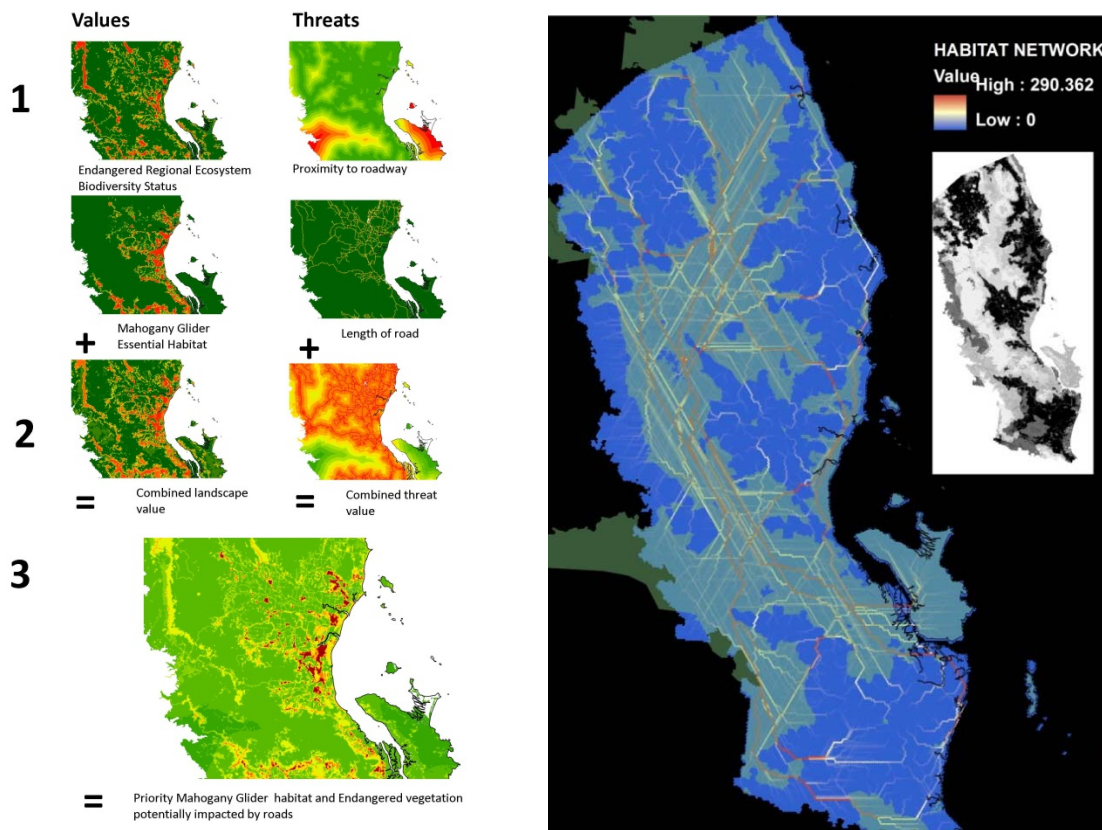


Figure 1 A simple scenario based on a collation of IBAPF data processed in Community Viz (left) and the output of a habitat network analysis derived from the biodiversity indicators (inset) within the framework (right)

Future Initiatives

Following both the lead and initiative of our dynamic executive, one of the most productive opportunities we have brought to bear over the past year is the cross-pollination between the core areas of local government operations across the region. Recent opportunities to collaborate with the technical groups representing regional asset managers, planners (and even engineers!) has seen the inception and delivery of projects that greater align our business across the office partitions. The initial “effort” of working across silos has been rewarded with highly integrated projects with some unexpected and productive insights on the way. We look forward to the delivery of these projects throughout the 2011-12 financial year and the future developments they lay the foundations for.

Another key aspect of the regional collaboration underway is a focus beyond just the Wet Tropics and working closely with our Western and Cape York Local Governments and Natural Resource Management Groups.

Staffing: **Travis Sydes, Regional Natural Asset Management Coordinator 1.0FTE**

Unaudited Financials

Profit and Loss

	<u>Jul '10 - Jun 11</u>
Ordinary Income/Expense	
Income	
FNQROC	
Advance Cairns annual contrib.	110,000.00
Annual Contribution	149,966.00
Miscellaneous	
Staff Christmas Party	250.00
Total Miscellaneous	<u>250.00</u>
Regional Planners Group	25,100.00
Regional Procurement Group	
RRG Funding Procurement Coordin	129,400.00
Total Regional Procurement Group	<u>129,400.00</u>
Regional Sustainability Group	29,000.00
Short Term Projects	
NBN Project	32,371.82
Short Term Projects - Other	2,072.74
Total Short Term Projects	<u>34,444.56</u>
FNQROC - Other	10,550.00
Total FNQROC	<u>488,710.56</u>
Natural Asset Management	
Annual Contribution	45,000.00
Terrain-WWASC/WoNS Project	4,000.00
Natural Asset Management - Other	80,000.00
Total Natural Asset Management	<u>129,000.00</u>
Regional Infrastructure Project	
Annual 3.75% contribution	102,266.25
Bridge Inspection Contributions	140,557.73
Funding/Subsidies	80,091.00
WSUD Project	4,100.00
Total Regional Infrastructure Project	<u>327,014.98</u>
Total Income	944,725.54
Expense	
Audit Costs	9,405.76
Bank Service Charges	255.00
FNQROC Expenses	
Annual Subscriptions	2,225.45
Chairs Honorarium	5,000.00
External Meeting Expenses	
Registration Fees Etc	1,676.35
Travel, Accom & Meals	4,148.43
Total External Meeting Expenses	<u>5,824.78</u>

Internal Meeting Expenses	
Internal Meeting Miscellaneous	35.31
Meeting Refreshments/Catering	2,850.91
Staff Conference Call Meetings	867.32
Total Internal Meeting Expenses	<u>3,753.54</u>
Miscellaneous	
Staff Christmas Party	581.89
Miscellaneous - Other	502.00
Total Miscellaneous	<u>1,083.89</u>
Mobile Phone Expenses	1,564.81
Payroll Expenses	
On Costs - Annual Leave	13,569.92
On Costs - Long Service Leave	10,876.91
Salaries	118,393.35
Total Payroll Expenses	<u>142,840.18</u>
Short Term Projects	
Advance Cairns	110,103.36
Local Laws Group	857.60
NBN Project Expenses	
NBN Project Expenses Unexpended	30,085.38
NBN Project Expenses - Other	2,082.90
Total NBN Project Expenses	<u>32,168.28</u>
Social Media Training	2,353.64
Tropical Innovation Awards	10,000.00
Total Short Term Projects	<u>155,482.88</u>
Stationery & Office Expenses	5,827.38
Training	2,950.00
Uniforms	631.50
Vehicle Expenses	2,822.42
Total FNQROC Expenses	<u>330,006.83</u>
Reg Infrastructure Projects	
Bridge Inspections	131,810.00
Consultancy Expenses	95,287.84
External Meetings	
Registration Fees Etc	3,600.01
Travel, Accom & Meals	5,549.65
Total External Meetings	<u>9,149.66</u>
Internal Meeting Expenses	
Meeting Refreshments/Catering	176.00
Internal Meeting Expenses - Other	744.71
Total Internal Meeting Expenses	<u>920.71</u>

Stationery & Office Expenses	130.00
Support Salaries	22,073.15
WUSD Project Expenses	
WUSD Proj Expenses Unexpended	8,200.00
Total WUSD Project Expenses	8,200.00
Total Reg Infrastructure Projects	267,571.36
Reg Natural Asset Management	
External Meetings	
Travel, Accom & Meals	2,908.84
Total External Meetings	2,908.84
Internal Meeting Expenses	
Meeting Refreshments/Catering	86.32
Internal Meeting Expenses - Other	179.36
Total Internal Meeting Expenses	265.68
Mobile Phone Expenses	1,015.41
Pond Apple/Hymenachne Project	412.56
Regional Landscape Repair Group	50.73
Salaries	78,318.56
Stationery & Office Expenses	1,583.04
Subscription/membership fees	60.00
Support Salaries	7,393.00
Terrain-Blueprint for the Bush	6,042.73
Vehicle mileage (staff)	5,371.65
Vehicle Share Expenses	11,587.10
Total Reg Natural Asset Management	115,009.30
Reg Planning & Sustainability	
Consultancy Expenses	9,999.90
External Meetings	
Conference calls	549.76
Regn Fees Etc	68.18
Travel, Accom & Meals	440.87
Total External Meetings	1,058.81
Internal Meeting Expenses	1,236.21
Miscellaneous	400.00
Mobile Phone Expenses	849.57
Salaries	34,568.08
Stationery & Office Expenses	1,446.67
Vehicle mileage (staff)	565.81
Total Reg Planning & Sustainability	50,125.05

Regional Asset Management	
External Meetings	338.79
Internal Meeting Expenses	
Meeting Refreshments/Catering	59.71
Internal Meeting Expenses - Other	<u>356.81</u>
Total Internal Meeting Expenses	416.52
NAMS.Plus	19,000.00
Vehicle Share Expenses	<u>820.90</u>
Total Regional Asset Management	20,576.21
Regional Development Manual	
Internal Meeting Expenses	634.53
Stationery & Office Expenses	<u>680.00</u>
Total Regional Development Manual	1,314.53
Regional Procurement	
External Meetings	
Registration Fees Etc	440.91
Travel, Accom & Meals	<u>1,714.42</u>
Total External Meetings	2,155.33
Internal Meeting Expenses	276.91
Legal fees	1,888.70
Mobile Phone Expenses	3,629.10
Procure Expenses Unexpended	115,000.00
Salaries	25,269.97
Stationery & Office Expenses	2,610.51
Regional Procurement - Other	<u>33.67</u>
Total Regional Procurement	<u>150,864.19</u>
Total Expense	<u>945,128.23</u>
Net Ordinary Income	-402.69
Other Income/Expense	
Other Income	
Interest Income	<u>11,879.55</u>
Total Other Income	<u>11,879.55</u>
Net Other Income	<u>11,879.55</u>
Net Income	<u><u>11,476.86</u></u>

Balance Sheet

	<u>Jun 30, 11</u>
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Chequing/Savings	
Cheque Account	160,361.67
Rydges Card	93.50
V2 Account	<u>351,668.98</u>
Total Chequing/Savings	512,124.15
Accounts Receivable	
Accounts Receivable	<u>9,184.00</u>
Total Accounts Receivable	9,184.00
Other Current Assets	
Accrued Interest Receivable	3,287.83
Pre Paid expenses	<u>1,275.00</u>
Total Other Current Assets	<u>4,562.83</u>
Total Current Assets	<u>525,870.98</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>525,870.98</u>
LIABILITIES	
Current Liabilities	
Credit Cards	
ANZ One Credit Card	<u>5,131.25</u>
Total Credit Cards	5,131.25
Other Current Liabilities	
Accrued Expenses	
Accrued Proc Project Expenses	115,000.00
Accrued Expenses - Other	<u>65,825.66</u>
Total Accrued Expenses	180,825.66
Payroll Liabilities	
Provision for Annual Leave	39,774.00
Provision for Long Service Leav	<u>35,130.00</u>
Total Payroll Liabilities	74,904.00
Tax Payable	<u>-2,595.99</u>
Total Other Current Liabilities	<u>253,133.67</u>
Total Current Liabilities	<u>258,264.92</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES	<u>258,264.92</u>
NET ASSETS	<u>267,606.06</u>
EQUITY	
Opening Bal Equity	293,919.17
Retained Earnings	-37,789.97
Net Income	<u>11,476.86</u>
TOTAL EQUITY	<u>267,606.06</u>