**What is a biosphere reserve?**

It is a special place like our [Sunshine Coast region](https://www.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/Council/Planning-and-Projects/Major-Regional-Projects/Sunshine-Coast-Biosphere), recognised internationally as an area of natural beauty, where people are living, working, learning and playing sustainably. It is about protecting marine and terrestrial areas, rural areas, as well as urban areas where people live and work. It’s also about enhancing our region’s liveability, supporting a prosperous new economy and building a strong and thriving community.

Ultimately it is about balancing the environmental, social, cultural and economic needs of today, without compromising the ability to meet the needs of future generations.

Biosphere reserves are recognised as part of the Man in the Biosphere (MAB) programme which is managed through the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). UNESCO describes [biosphere reserves](https://en.unesco.org/biosphere) as, ‘learning places for sustainable development’.

**What does it mean to be a biosphere reserve?**

A UNESCO biosphere designation identifies the Sunshine Coast as a region striving to be sustainable – socio-culturally, economically and environmentally. Our biosphere reserve status helps us demonstrate to communities around the world how environmental protection and our actions towards sustainable development lie at the heart of our community’s liveability.

It is a long-term commitment where we need to report to UNESCO on our progress through a ten-yearly periodic review process. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) for peace, prosperity, people and planet provide a comprehensive and internationally recognised framework for us to collectively align the way we each live, work, learn and play every day – and form an important foundation of the performance measurement framework of our Sunshine Coast Biosphere.

Our [Sunshine Coast Biosphere](https://www.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/Council/Planning-and-Projects/Major-Regional-Projects/Sunshine-Coast-Biosphere) objectives reflect the main ‘[functions](https://en.unesco.org/biosphere/about)’ of biosphere reserves:

* People - actively promoting sustainable practices, use and stewardship, and inclusivity.
* Conservation - maintaining and enhancing our natural environment.
* (Economic) Development - delivering a diverse and resilient economy.
* Logistical support - research, monitoring, education and training.

Across our region, people are committed to finding the balance where responsible development and active conservation are aligned, and solutions to problems and challenges that involve navigating tensions between these objectives. Therefore, the way we make complex decisions within our biosphere is also important. That is why our Sunshine Coast Biosphere has a governance framework to guide decision making, underpinned by four governance principles – *balanced, transparent, inclusive and responsive*.

**How is being a biosphere relevant to me?**

As a biosphere community that celebrates people and nature, every resident, visitor, business and government entity have an important role to play in protecting and enhancing the Sunshine Coast for today’s children and all those who will enjoy the beauty and liveability of our region now and into the future. It’s about:

* creating a legacy for our children's future
* caring for our beautiful landscapes and stunning beaches
* leveraging economic opportunities to grow local businesses.

We can each choose to think globally while acting locally as we go about our daily lives to ensure our Sunshine Coast biosphere remains the special place that it is.

**Quick Facts:**

* There are 738 biosphere reserves globally in 134 countries – forming a [world network](https://en.unesco.org/biosphere/wnbr).
* Approximately 260 million people (about 3.3% of global population) live in biosphere reserves.
* Sunshine Coast local government area was recognised internationally as a biosphere reserve in June 2022.
* Sunshine Coast Biosphere is one of five UNESCO biosphere reserves in Australia.
* Three of Australia’s biosphere reserves are in Qld (Noosa, Great Sandy and Sunshine Coast).
* Sunshine Coast Biosphere covers the total local government area of 258,500 hectares and extends off the coast to 3 nautical miles.

**Curriculum links:**Learning about and within our Sunshine Coast Biosphere provides many opportunities to link to the Australian Curriculum through all learning areas, general capabilities [and cross-curriculum priorities](https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/cross-curriculum-priorities/), particularly ‘sustainability’.