


Sunshine Coast Council

Rural property landowner

handbook

November 2025





Edition November 2025

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Acknowledgements

Sunshine Coast Council acknowledges the Kabi Kabi peoples and the Jinibara peoples and recognises that the Sunshine Coast local government area has always been a place of cultural, spiritual, social and economic significance to its Traditional Custodians. Council is committed to working in partnership with Traditional Custodians and the First Nations community to support self-determination through economic and community development.



Rural property

Understanding your responsibilities

New owners coming from other parts of Australia to settle on Sunshine Coast rural land need to be aware of the obligations and restrictions that apply to rural property owners in the Sunshine Coast local government area.

Whether you come from other rural areas or from an urban area looking for a green change, a hobby farm or weekend retreat, this handbook will help you understand your responsibilities.

It contains helpful links to areas of concern including weeds, vegetation clearing, bushfire management, earthworks (including dams), on-site disposal and water supply.

Navigating this document



Hover over the QR Code and then click on the link that appears. This will take you to a council webpage of handy links with information that corresponds with different sections in this handbook.

Weed management

Invasive plants and weeds on private land

All residents are responsible for managing invasive plants on their properties, this also includes aquatic weeds. This can sometimes seem complicated if you are a new rural property owner.

The Sunshine Coast Biosecurity Plan helps you to understand your responsibilities to manage invasive plants and offers you guidance to develop a plan to protect your property.

Managing invasive plants

Each year, council undertakes a biosecurity planning process to identify and prioritise invasive plant management programs. This includes the Biosecurity Inspection Program, where council may inspect your property to help you identify invasive plants and understand your general biosecurity obligations in accordance with the Biosecurity Act 2014. Visit council's website via the QR code to learn more about what actions council is taking and what help may be available to you.

Weed identification

To help you identify and control weeds, visit council's website for a number of handy tools, such as the Weeds of South East Queensland App. Follow the "Identify and report an invasive plant" link via the QR code to learn more.

If you would like to speak directly with a council officer to assist with weed identification, please contact council on 07 5475 7272 or 1300 007 272.

If you suspect a plant is a prohibited invasive plant, you can seek extra advice from Biosecurity Queensland through the "Invasive plants (DAF)" link via the QR code.

Another option is to send a sample directly to the Queensland Herbarium for identification. This is a free service provided by the Herbarium and includes instructions on how to collect a sample.



Background: Fireweed (*Senecio madagascariensis*)
Foreground: Dutchman's pipe (*Aristolochia elegans*)



European red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)





Feral pigs (*Sus scrofa*)

Hog deer (*Axis porcinus*)

Invasive animals

Everyone has an obligation to manage invasive animals on their property. Council's website has handy tools to help you identify and report priority invasive species, such as the Feralscan App.

Get help to protect your place

Learn how Council supports rural landholders in managing impacts of invasive animal species and discover practical resources to help you protect your property and contribute to regional biosecurity efforts.

Biosecurity education program

Council's biosecurity education program aims to engage, educate and connect the community with invasive plant and animal officers and their expert advice.

Council conservation programs

Council is actively working with landholders, community groups, and government agencies to protect our region from the impacts of invasive animals. Through a coordinated and integrated approach, Council delivers targeted control programs including monitoring high-risk areas.



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Vegetation clearing

Vegetation clearing is sometimes necessary and unavoidable. However, some vegetation is protected from being cleared in our region. This includes vegetation and trees on your property. A number of Queensland Government and Sunshine Coast Council planning regulations inform what can and can't be done.

To understand the requirements about vegetation clearing on private property, including if you need a permit to remove vegetation, visit the guide on council's website through the QR code.

If you are considering vegetation clearing on your property, please contact council's Development Services team on 07 5475 7272. They can provide guidance and advice on permit requirements.

Erosion and sediment

During rainfall, large amounts of sediment is washed into local waterways. The sediment can come from the exposed soil on land being cleared for weed management, housing, roads, and other infrastructure work. Having the right control measures in place is vital, the link via the QR code below lists suitable options for different situations. Fines can apply to those who do not use correct erosion and sediment-control measures.



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Bushfire management

Queensland Fire Department is the principal agency for bushfire preparedness and response in Queensland.

Council is responsible for identifying development conditions and the associated bushfire hazard overlay. Council also conducts fire management activities within their own reserves.



Bushfire planning

It's your responsibility to prepare your family and property for a potential bushfire, including assessing the potential risk, developing a survival plan and preparing your property by maintaining fire service access, lawns, fire breaks and removing flammable around your house. Visit the Queensland Fire Department website via the QR code for more information.

Sunshine Coast Councils Disaster Hub brings together real-time disaster and hazard information from within Council and external sources during disaster events. Follow the link via the QR code to discover more.

It can also be important to think about what type of vegetation you have in your yard and how close it is to buildings. The "Bushfire Building Guideline" link via the QR code outlines more.

The Queensland Fire Department (QFD) website (via the QR code) has more information, insights and support resources to help with bushfire planning and preparedness.

The Rural Fire Service Queensland Brigade Officer in your area can also offer extra advice. Visit the QFD website for contacts for various brigades for the Sunshine Coast and surrounding areas (Greater Brisbane Region) via the QR code.

Development and bushfire management requirements

The Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme provides planning direction for bushfires through the Bushfire Hazard Overlay.

The Bushfire Hazard Overlay maps can help you to understand the bushfire hazard for your location.

The link via the QR code (Planning scheme 2014 maps) will take you to a map of the Sunshine Coast region.

The State Planning Policy (SPP) mapping identified Bushfire Prone Areas (BPA) that may trigger the need for development in these areas to be assessed by Council.

You can lodge a request online or call Council on 07 5475 7272 for more information.

Council's website has more information on its fire management program for its reserves.



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Earthworks and dams

If you are planning to undertake earthworks or import fill onto your property, it is important to be aware of council permit requirements, and the possible impacts these activities can have on your neighbours.

In some cases, importing fill material onto a property can alter existing drainage and may lead to local flooding and stormwater problems.

Many properties in our region, especially in low lying areas, are located on flood plains.

Importing fill material in the floodplain is not advised because it reduces the available flood storage area, which can lead to an increase in flood levels and affect flood behaviour on other properties.

Undertaking earthwork activities and importing clean fill material onto private property is regulated through the Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme 2014.

Certain work can be undertaken without a permit from council. This, however, depends on a number of factors, such as zoning, lot size, flood hazard mapping and drainage deficiency.

If you are considering earthworks on your property, please contact council's Development Information team on 07 5475 7272. They can provide guidance and advice on permit requirements.

The earthworks fact sheet via the QR code has further information on the applicable codes and permits.

Dams

Building a dam on your property is also considered earthworks and it's important you get all relevant approvals before you start any construction.

You can lodge a request online or call Council on (07) 5475 7272 for more information.



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Sunshine Coast hinterland landholder environment grant project

Holiday accommodation and other tourism related activities on rural property

Offering your rural property for holiday accommodation or tourism related activities (such as brewery or function/wedding venue) may require development approval.

Before starting the business and advertising your property to the public, visit Council's website which provides support for setting up your property for tourism related activities.

You can lodge a request online or call Council on 07 5475 7272 for more information.

To find out more about using your property for tourism related activities, contact Council's development advice service via the QR code.



Tiny houses

Tiny house is a popular term used to describe a small and compact form of accommodation (generally less than 45m² in floor area).

These can be buildings or, on wheels like a caravan:

1. A tiny house on wheels can only be used for temporary accommodation under Council's Local Law.
2. A tiny house that is fixed to the land e.g. fixed to concrete footings, connected to water and/or sewerage infrastructure (including an On-site Sewerage Facility) is considered a 'building' and is subject to the same planning, building and plumbing laws that apply to a permanent building.

Find out more in Council's Information sheet linked via the QR code below.



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To note: general development of the property may require a permit from Council, and buildings typically require at least building approval - for example, even a shed larger than 10m².



On-site sewage disposal and grey water use

Many rural properties are not connected to public sewage infrastructure. If that is the case for your property, you will need an on-site sewage facility.

Visit Council's website via the QR code (onsite water treatment and grey water) for more information about the requirement and council's approval process.

You can lodge a request online or call Council on 07 5475 7272 for more information.

Unity Water also provides some useful suggestions on the use of grey water and bore water, linked via the QR code.



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Water tanks

Installing rainwater tanks requires prior approval by council to ensure rainwater tanks connected to internal plumbing follow the correct building standards and codes.

Visit council's website via the QR code for more information on council's application and approval process for rainwater tanks.

The Australian Government has developed a handy overview and guide for landholders interested in water tank installation on their property.

Unity Water also provides some helpful information associated with rainwater tanks and testing requirements along with fill station locations for water carriers in times of low rainfall. "Rainwater tanks (Unity water)" via the QR code.

In times of low rainfall, water tanks may require supplementary filling by registered water carriers.

While council can not recommend any one provider to you, the Yellow pages or Google is a good starting point to find water carriers in your area.

To find a provider search "water cartage, Sunshine Coast, Queensland" or follow the link via the QR code.



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Waterways

The management and care of waterways on private property is your responsibility as the landowner.

Activities within a waterway are governed by the Queensland Government and permits and approvals may be required under Water Act 2000 and/or Planning Act 2016.

Riparian protection permits

You will generally need a riverine protection permit before you excavate, place fill, or destroy native vegetation in any watercourse, lake or spring unless you meet the exemption requirements. Click the “Riverine protection permits (Business QLD)” link via the QR code for more information.

Stock and domestic rights

A riparian right in Queensland is the riparian landholders’ access to stock and domestic water via riparian water authorisations.

The basic right, as stipulated in the Water Act 2000 (also known as ‘riparian right’), is the right of an owner of land adjoining a watercourse, lake or spring, to take from that stream for stock or domestic purposes.

This riparian stock and domestic access is separate from an entitlement.

A riparian water acknowledgement must be submitted to Queensland Government to access this right to take water. Follow the “Forms and fees for water

authorisations (Business QLD)” link via the QR code to learn more.

Water licence

You may need a water licence for taking or interfering with surface water, overland flow water or underground water. Click the “Authorisations in water areas (Business QLD)” link via the QR code.

Woody debris

Large woody debris, such as branches and logs, serve an important ecological function in river systems and are a sign of a healthy watercourse.

In general, they are best left where they are to provide critical habitat for native fish, frogs, and other aquatic animals.

However, in specific cases involving public safety, access to infrastructure, research, or cleanup after a disaster event, removal may be necessary while ensuring compliance with relevant legislation.

Advice and permits to remove dangerous debris from a watercourse can be obtained from your local Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water office (“Contact RDMW” via QR code).



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Crossings (waterway barrier works)

Constructing waterway crossings (waterway barrier works) may need development approval under the Planning Act 2016. Follow the “Waterway barrier (DAF)” link via the QR code to learn more.

Sand and gravel extraction

Before starting works to excavate quarry sand, gravel and other materials in watercourses and lakes, you will need to get the required authorisations and ensure you meet all associated requirements (“Extracting riverine quarrying materials” via the QR code).



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Tidal zones

Tidal works generally include the construction or demolition of structures such as jetties, pontoons and marine basins. Please check the requirements by clicking the “Tidal works (Queensland Government)” link via the QR code before any works are done.

Fish habitats

A declared fish habitat area (FHA) is an area protected against physical disturbance from coastal development, while still allowing legal fishing. All habitats within a declared FHA, including marine plants like mangroves and saltmarshes, are protected. Only limited development is allowed; private development is restricted. Read more by following the “Fish habitat areas (Parks)” link via the QR code.

Before any work is done in a fish habitat area, please check the requirements by visiting the “Fish habitat areas (Business QLD)” link via the QR code.

Constructing and modifying levee banks

Levees play an important role in floodplain management. They also have the potential to impact on neighbouring properties, the community and the catchment as a whole.

Because of this, construction or modification of levees is regulated by Queensland Government planning laws. The level of assessment required depends on the potential impacts of the levee. Learn more through the “Levee banks” link via the QR code.

Waterway works associated with emergencies and disasters

Natural disasters, such as floods and cyclones, can significantly impact watercourses and adjacent properties.

You can reduce these impacts by carrying out certain activities. Find out more about the legal requirements for undertaking activities in a watercourse before, during and after an emergency or disaster on the Queensland Government website by following the “Watercourse works” link via the QR code.



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Conservation

There are a couple of programs that landholders can become involved in that supports them in conserving bushland on their properties, including Land for Wildlife and Voluntary Conservation Agreements.

You can also volunteer to conserve and restore natural bushland in council's environmental reserves. Join with other volunteers to plant trees, create habitat corridors and restore local waterways.

Follow the "Get involved in conservation" link via the QR code to learn more.



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