

Queensland Government Response to Premier's Council on Climate Change Working Paper

Working Paper 4

Capturing carbon in the rural landscape: Opportunities for Queensland

Coordinated by the Department of Environment and Resource Management

May 2010



Introduction

The Premier's Council on Climate Change provides the Queensland Government with high-level strategic advice on climate change issues and actions. The Council provided Working Paper 4: *Capturing carbon in the rural landscape: Opportunities for Queensland* to the Queensland Government for consideration in October 2009.

The working paper was informed by the latest scientific findings in a technical report, *An Analysis of Greenhouse Gas Mitigation and Carbon Biosequestration Opportunities from Rural Land Use*, commissioned from CSIRO by the Council. The report identified significant potential for Queensland to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through land use and management processes that will increase the amount of carbon stored in the rural landscape. Based on these findings, the Council developed 16 recommendations for Queensland Government policy and investment action to harness the biosequestration and emissions abatement potential of Queensland's rural landscape.

The Council's recommendations were focused significantly on preparing Queensland to take advantage of carbon markets driven by the Commonwealth Government's proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS). However, significant amendments have been made to the CPRS since the Council paper was provided to the Queensland Government and implementation of the CPRS has been delayed. Despite this, some form of enlarged terrestrial carbon offset market remains likely given the broad support for a strong role for terrestrial carbon in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The significant emissions reduction, economic and natural resource management opportunities presented by Queensland's rural landscape make it essential to continue to investigate and implement policy and investment actions in preparation for the emergence of these markets.

In May 2010, the Queensland Government considered the Council's recommendations and decided to implement a terrestrial carbon action plan to optimise biosequestration outcomes from the state's rural landscape and carbon market opportunities for Queensland's landholders. The action plan will consist of initiatives as outlined below in the Queensland Government response to the recommendations from the Premier's Council on Climate Change.



PCCC recommendation	Outcome	Government Response
1. Support landholder engagement in carbon forestry		
<p>1.1 NRM organisations</p> <p>Prioritise Queensland Government investment in NRM programs on biosequestration to support these groups in providing business services (for example brokerage arrangements, advice on market requirements and property design) to landholders.</p> <p>Include policies and targets in NRM plans that support the development of biosequestration projects that deliver natural resource and biodiversity conservation objectives.</p>	Accepted	<p>The Queensland Government will encourage NRM bodies to incorporate carbon forestry opportunities into Regional NRM plans by using NRM funding arrangements as a lever. Biosequestration will be added as a priority for funding under the government's Q2 Coasts and Country program from 2010-11.</p>
<p>1.2 On-line information.</p> <p>Develop a web-based information service on carbon forestry opportunities, brokerage services, legislative requirements and forestry management.</p>	Accepted in principle	<p>The Queensland Government will continue to develop its web-based information system, the Carbon Accumulation through Ecosystem Recovery (CATER), to provide landholders with on-line information on the carbon storage potential of native regrowth vegetation. CATER is scheduled to be launched in 2013.</p>
2. Policy adjustment to balance sequestration and other outcomes from forestry		
<p>2.1 Regional Planning:</p> <p>Integrate policies into statutory regional plans that promote carbon forestry and biosequestration and align with regional NRM plan objectives and targets.</p>	Accepted	<p>All future statutory regional plans will include a policy principle to allow the consideration of carbon forestry where opportunities are identified in the related NRM plan. Existing regional plans will be amended as part of the five-year statutory review process. The Queensland Government will establish supportive connections between statutory regional plans, local planning schemes, and NRM plans by providing guidance to local government planners.</p>



<p>2.2 Managing environmental impacts.</p> <p>Review the adequacy of Queensland's existing regulatory policies and market mechanisms for managing the implications of large scale carbon forestry projects for biodiversity, vegetation and water resources.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>The Queensland Government will manage the potential impacts of carbon forestry through existing regulatory frameworks for vegetation management and water resource planning.</p> <p>The government will consider options for using incentives to achieve higher biodiversity outcomes from carbon forestry through the development of biodiversity policies.</p>
<p>2.3 Good quality agricultural land</p> <p>Consider specific planning mechanisms to manage the risk of encroachment of large scale carbon forestry on good quality agricultural land.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>The Queensland Government is developing a new policy and planning framework to enable impacts on strategic cropping land from incompatible land uses, including large-scale carbon forestry, to be considered, assessed and minimised.</p>
<p>2.4 Plantation timber</p> <p>Develop the Queensland Timber Plantation Strategy to build a sustainable timber plantation sector.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>The Queensland Government will work closely with key stakeholders to finalise and implement the Strategy, which includes a commitment to identify and facilitate opportunities for timber plantations arising from carbon trading. The government will review its legislation to ensure that businesses can effectively participate in a future national carbon market.</p>
<p>2.5 Land clearing</p> <p>Develop options to further reduce emissions including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an incentives package for discussion with the Australian Government • carbon offsets for clearing under Queensland's environmental offsets policy • reviewing enforcement processes for non-compliance with vegetation management regulations. 	<p>Accepted in principle</p>	<p><i>Incentives package</i> – the Queensland Government will engage with the Australian Government about possibilities for incentives to encourage landholders to retain regrowth not already protected under the <i>Vegetation Management Act</i>.</p> <p><i>Offsets</i> – the Queensland Government will review regional vegetation management codes to scope options to offset emissions for certain clearing activities.</p> <p><i>Enforcement processes</i> – unexplained vegetation clearing will continue to be monitored through the Statewide Landcover And Tree Study (SLATS) reporting and addressed through the DERM compliance strategy.</p>

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3. Information to guide immediate policy adjustments		
<p>3.1 To guide land use and NRM planning at a regional and local level</p> <p>Undertake spatial mapping at a regional and local scale to determine areas environmentally suitable for carbon forestry.</p> <p>Undertake economic modelling at a regional level to determine where carbon forestry will be suitable.</p>	<p>Accepted in principle</p>	<p>A high-level, state-wide map will be developed to identify areas which may be economically suitable for carbon forestry. A methodology will be developed for NRM bodies to undertake fine-scale spatial mapping within their region to indicate where carbon forestry is suitable and would deliver multiple benefits such as biodiversity outcomes.</p>
4. Policy reform to further reduce emissions		
<p>4.1 Native forest harvesting</p> <p>As part of the next review of the <i>Code of Practice for Native Forest Timber Production on State Lands 2007</i> and the <i>Code applying to native forest practice on freehold land</i>, include actions to increase carbon stocks in native forests.</p> <p>Progress the Statewide Forests Process and phase out native forest harvesting in State-owned forests.</p>	<p>Accepted in principle</p>	<p>The next review for each timber harvesting Code of Practice will address mechanisms to enhance the retention of carbon stocks during forest harvesting.</p>
<p>4.2 Biofuels</p> <p>Investigate the benefits of linking Queensland's ethanol target to a sustainability standard.</p> <p>Develop emissions reduction and other sustainability criteria to guide future market support, and research and development investment.</p>	<p>Accepted in principle</p> <p>Not accepted; alternative response proposed.</p>	<p>The sustainability of ethanol production will continue to be monitored and, if appropriate, a sustainability standard can be prescribed by regulation (noting that an enforceable standard is problematic).</p> <p>The Queensland Government has proposed the development of a national Low Carbon Fuel Standard (LCFS) through the Council of the Australian Federation (CAF). The government will continue to support the adoption of a national LCFS as the proposal progresses through the CAF process.</p>



<p>4.3 Savanna burning</p> <p>Monitor the outcomes of the NAILSMA savanna burning trials in Queensland, and consider funding to support enterprise development in relevant Indigenous communities.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>The Queensland Government will monitor the outcomes of the savanna fire management projects in north Queensland. Pending successful completion of these trials, the government will investigate further opportunities to promote economic benefits for Indigenous Queenslanders arising out of controlled savanna burning regimes.</p> <p>Opportunities from using Indigenous lands for carbon offsets will also be investigated. The Queensland Government will investigate the potential economic benefits for Indigenous Queenslanders from using Indigenous lands for carbon offsets.</p>
<p>5. Information to guide longer term policy adjustment (research and development)</p>		
<p>5.1 Coordination</p> <p>Investigate the benefits of hosting a Cooperative Research Centre on terrestrial carbon in Queensland, to promote stronger linkages between state, national and industry research.</p>	<p>Not accepted; alternative response proposed</p>	<p>The Queensland Government will investigate opportunities to leverage Australian Government funding for research relating to biosequestration activities of particular strategic interest to Queensland.</p>
<p>5.2 Livestock emissions</p> <p>Investigate the potential to establish a research hub in Queensland to provide leading-edge research into livestock management approaches and technologies suitable to open grazing systems.</p>	<p>Accepted subject to funding</p>	<p>The Queensland Government will design a research hub or 'alliance' for livestock methane emissions research, based on the existing collaboration between DEEDI and University of Queensland.</p>
<p>5.3 Biochar</p> <p>Support a biochar demonstration project in Queensland, utilising sugar cane waste and production processes.</p>	<p>Not accepted at this stage</p>	<p>Biochar has been assessed as having a relatively low sequestration potential in Queensland, and significant work would be required to resolve outstanding methodological issues. Further, biochar is not proposed for inclusion in the prospective CPRS in the near term. Accordingly, the Queensland Government will prioritise its research efforts on land uses that have large emissions reduction potential for Queensland and which are close to market ready.</p>

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<p>5.4 Native forest harvesting</p> <p>Utilise existing data on native forest harvesting to improve accounting for different native forest types in Queensland.</p>	<p>Accepted in principle</p>	<p>The Queensland Government will work with the Australian Government to assess opportunities to incorporate high-quality data from its Statewide Landcover And Tree Study (SLATS) into the National Carbon Accounting System (NCAS) methodology to improve national accounting for different native forest types in Queensland.</p>
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