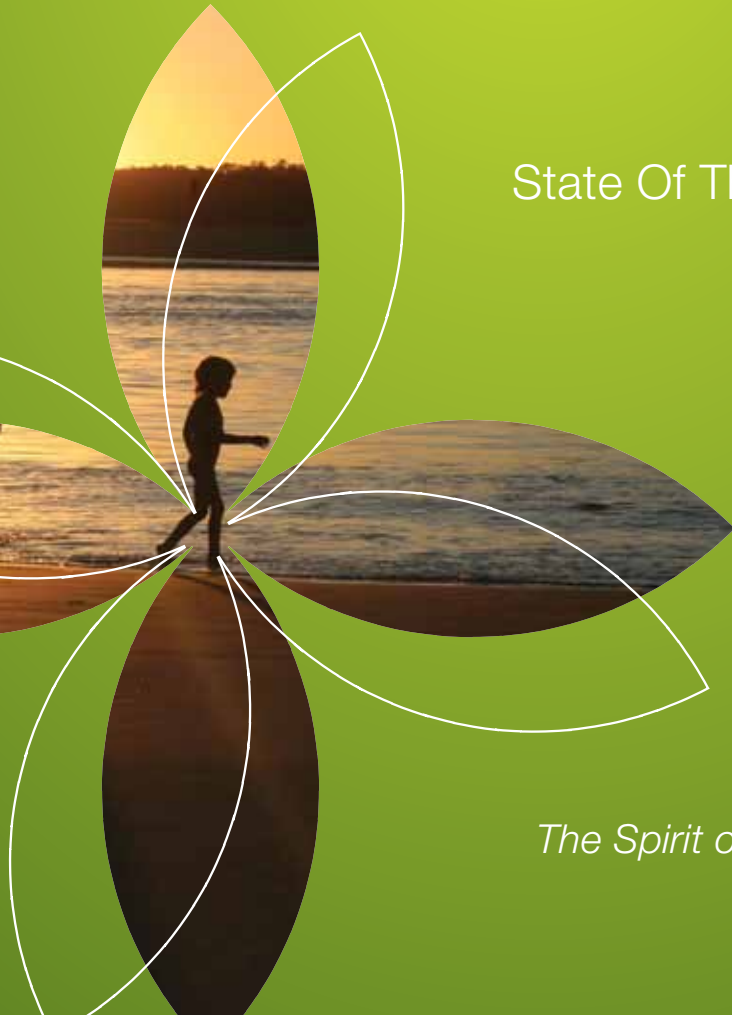


noosa<sup>™</sup>  
biosphere

State Of The Biosphere  
Report Card



*The Spirit of the Biosphere*  
September 2013



## The Spirit of The Biosphere

The Noosa Biosphere is a special place. Our superb natural environment is recognised by UNESCO and is one of only 621 Biosphere Reserves in the world. In fact, it was the first Biosphere Reserve in Queensland. Its natural beauty, variety and uniqueness make it a true national treasure.

But there's another reason why it's such a special place. You.

The Noosa Biosphere is abundant with people who think, act and feel deeply about their local community and environment. Each of us is a custodian of this special place.

It's about how we, as a community of communities, choose to interact with each other and with the natural environment to build a prosperous future for all.

It's called the Noosa Biosphere spirit.

When you look around you can see it everywhere – amongst neighbours, in schools, at the park and in local businesses.

The best thing about it? We all have it in us. Whether you live, work or play here, your contribution makes a difference - for today and tomorrow.

#NBSPirit  
[www.noosabiosphere.org.au](http://www.noosabiosphere.org.au)  
[www.facebook.com/NoosaBiosphere](https://www.facebook.com/NoosaBiosphere)  
Twitter: @noosabiosphere

*Front cover image: courtesy  
Katja Anton Photography  
Photo: (this page)  
courtesy Tourism Noosa*



*Photo: courtesy Patrick Oberem  
Friends of Lake Weyba*



“The Biosphere vision provides a clear focus that the whole community can embrace, to ensure that our natural environment and social fabric is valued, cared for and enhanced for future generations.”

## A Word from the Chair

### The spirit of our community

The Noosa region was designated Queensland's first Man and Biosphere (MaB) Reserve by UNESCO in 2007. This was a fitting international recognition of this special place, the spirit of the community and the combined efforts of local groups and individuals over many years. The Noosa region has a proud history of stewardship of an environment that is rich in natural beauty, biodiversity and cultural heritage. The Biosphere vision provides a clear focus that the whole community can embrace, to ensure that our natural environment and social fabric is valued, cared for and enhanced for future generations.

The concept of Biosphere Reserves is for them to act as incubators for local sustainable development projects and to share this information and learning within and across Biosphere Reserves. To do this well we need to be able to identify, document, monitor and communicate key features of our Biosphere Reserve. We need to have some means for understanding the current situation to be able to tell in five, ten or 50 years' time, whether we have made a difference for the better or not. That is why the State of the Biosphere Report Card is going to be an important document and tool for us.

This report aims to provide a snapshot of some key indicators from across the environmental, social, economic, tourism and cultural realms of our Biosphere Reserve and to tell something of our story. We hope that it will help raise awareness about where we are now and what we believe should happen into the future. We welcome everyone to join in the conversation and to contribute to sharing and promoting the Noosa Biosphere spirit.

#NBSPirit

**Dr Sue Davis**

*Chair, Noosa Biosphere Limited*



## About this Report

This inaugural Noosa Biosphere Reserve “State of the Biosphere Report Card” is a snapshot of the Biosphere Reserve in 2013. It is also an aspirational document that reflects the spirit of the Biosphere and lays a strong foundation for future reporting as more comprehensive data becomes available.

Our team has reviewed available sources to provide a summary of the values that we see reflected in the behaviour of the Biosphere community – from a social, economic and environmental viewpoint.

One of the biggest challenges has been the lack of available data. This report has identified the gaps that exist in monitoring data and research as an important outcome of the work.

The area incorporating the Noosa Biosphere Reserve is the former Noosa Local Government Area (LGA) boundary as the original submission to UNESCO was initiated by Noosa Shire Council.

Since amalgamation in 2008, Noosa no longer existed as a recognised LGA which means that data normally captured and recorded by LGA, such as ABS Census data, is now reflective of the entire Sunshine Coast area and cannot be broken down into data that covers only the Noosa Biosphere Reserve.

This report is the start of a journey for Noosa Biosphere. We are seeking the community's feedback on this product and to work with the various authorities to ensure that future data collection provides us with the insight we need to better identify and track key performance areas.

Over time, the indicators should be able to tell us whether things are getting better, worse or staying the same. This can help influence and guide public policy and people's actions as they interact within the Biosphere.

With de-amalgamation, Noosa will again become its own LGA and much data from 2014 onwards will be specific to the Biosphere Reserve area. It must be noted that this data will not be available until at least 2015 when it is anticipated that the report card will be able to present a more comprehensive reporting and rating system in line with the plans and strategies of the new Noosa Council.

The Noosa Biosphere community is made up of many groups, many volunteers, who strive to make the Biosphere a better place for today and for the future. You will find information on several of these groups within this report card.

We welcome your feedback and input and hope that through this report you will achieve a better understanding of what it means to be living, working or playing in a Biosphere Reserve and how you might make a positive contribution.

#NBSpirit

## We... give back

### Volunteering for a stronger community

In Australia we have a proud culture of giving. Our nation ranked in the top three giving nations in the World Giving Index 2011 measured by someone donating money, volunteering time to an organisation or helping someone he/she didn't know (Charities Aid Foundation 2011). Volunteering not only feels good but it also helps to improve a community's resilience and spirit and provides wellness benefits to the volunteer.

The percentage of people who volunteer for a group or organisation for which they are not remunerated is 17.8% Australia wide and 20.2% Sunshine Coast wide. The Noosa Biosphere community is above the trend at 22.3% in the Noosa Hinterland and an average volunteer rate of 20.6% across all areas that constitute the Biosphere Reserve.

*Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2011.*

### Did you know?

Noosa Biosphere Limited has active involvement of more than 70 passionate community volunteers on Cultural; Environment; Education, Research and Development; Social; and Economic Community Sector Boards. Tourism Noosa also has a working group committed to advancing tourism within the principles of a Biosphere Reserve. These groups form part of the structure to manage the Noosa Biosphere Reserve and are directed by a Governance Board which is also made up of... you guessed it – volunteers! In 2012 alone, the annual dollar value of this contribution was estimated to be more than \$332,000. We are also proud to have a lot of local volunteer groups as our Biosphere Reserve Partners. Become involved by visiting [www.noosabiosphere.org.au](http://www.noosabiosphere.org.au)

### Conserving for a greener future

Land for Wildlife is a free, voluntary conservation program that supports participants in protecting, enhancing and rehabilitating native flora and fauna on their property. To date, 284 properties providing 3,776 hectares of private land within the Biosphere are part of this program. This is an increase of an additional 120 new properties contributing an additional 1400 hectares since Noosa was awarded the status as a Biosphere Reserve in 2007. In addition, there are currently 18 properties under Voluntary Conservation Agreements which cover an additional 295 hectares, compared with zero in 2007.

*Source: Sunshine Coast Council*

### Did you know?

Benefits and assistance to Land for Wildlife participants include:

- free onsite land management advice tailored to your property
- property revisits and ongoing property-specific advice
- free workshops and field days
- access to technical advice and resources, including environment grants and other incentives
- opportunities to network with like-minded landholders
- free Land for Wildlife sign for registered properties acknowledging the commitment made to nature conservation.

For more information phone **5475 7272** or email **LFW@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au**



## We... tread lightly

### The health of our waterways

The Ecosystem Health Monitoring Program (EHMP) is one of the most comprehensive freshwater, estuarine and marine monitoring programs in Australia. The EHMP is managed by Healthy Waterways who prepare an annual report card to highlight the ecosystem health of South East Queensland's major zones. In the 2012 Healthy Waterways Report Card the Noosa Freshwater Catchment received a B grade down from an A- in 2011. While the current conditions meet all met ecosystem health values there had been a decline in most indicators except aquatic macro-invertebrates which improved. For estuarine and marine areas the Noosa Estuary retained its B+ grade. Data over the past six years indicates that despite extreme weather events (floods and droughts), water quality in both the freshwater, and estuarine and marine systems remains fairly stable in the A to B range.

YEARS	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Noosa Catchment - Freshwater	B-	B	B+	B	A-	B
Noosa River - Estuarine & Marine Areas	A	A-	B+	B+	B+	B+

#### Legend: Ecosystem Health Report Card Grades ('A' to 'F')

**Excellent** (A-) (A) (A+)

Conditions meet all set ecosystem health values; all key processes are functional and all critical habitats are in near pristine condition.

**Good** (B-) (B) (B+)

Conditions meet all set ecosystem health values in most of the reporting region; most key processes are functional and most critical habitats are intact.

Source: Healthy Waterways Report Card, 2007-2012

### Did you know?

Noosa River is the lifeblood of Noosa Biosphere's rich and diverse ecosystems. It spans the Noosa and Great Sandy Biosphere Reserves and is the major waterway flowing south from the Great Sandy region through Lakes Cootharaba and Cooribah, before finally entering Laguna Bay at Noosa Heads. The Noosa River catchment is internationally recognised in the Japan-Australia and China-Australia migratory bird agreements, and it is high in endemic species of flora and fauna. Approximately two-thirds of the Noosa River catchment occurs within the Noosa Biosphere.

Noosa Waterwatch is a network of volunteers who actively participate in water quality monitoring, data collection and community education. Together they monitor water quality at 45 sites across the Noosa River and Six Mile Creek catchments each month. This data informs the Ecosystem Health Monitoring Program. Contact Noosa Waterwatch on **5485 2155** or Noosa Integrated Catchment Association on **5449 9650** to find out how you can make a positive difference to our aquatic ecosystem health.



### The use of our lands

A key component of UNESCO Man and the Biosphere accreditation is the percentage and type of different land uses (e.g. agriculture, conservation, residential, recreational, commercial, industrial). The rationale for the zonation (core, buffer and transition) of the Biosphere Reserve is to create a working model of a sustainable community with a range of different types of productive landscapes.

ZONE	2006	2013	Changes to Zones
Core	24,870 ha	28,655 ha	+4%
Buffer	28,050 ha	30,653 ha	+4%
Transition	30,830 ha	24,442 ha	-8%

**Core** consists of areas with outstanding environment, biodiversity and natural history values that are managed primarily for conservation, and which are supported by a strong statutory framework.

**Buffer** is land currently managed primarily for conservation and/or sustainable development outcomes. However, other more human development orientated activities also take place within the buffer.

**Transition** is land currently managed primarily for social and economic development outcomes. Some more conservation orientated activities also take place within the transition area. Increasing the level of recognition of environmental values of these lands by land managers is encouraged.

Source: Sunshine Coast Council

### Did you know?

The Noosa River catchment's remnant vegetation consists of 64 regional ecosystems, distributed over more than 33,900 hectares; six major vegetation groupings communities are represented, being Mangroves and Salt Marsh, Fordune, Heath and Wallum, Melaleuca, Eucalypt and Rainforest. Noosa and District Landcare is a dynamic, proactive organisation committed to achieving long term environmental outcomes in the Burnett, Mary and Sunshine Coast regions. Contact them at **admin@noosalandcare.org** or phone: **5485 2468**.

Photo: courtesy Tourism Noosa



## We... choose wisely

### How we move around

There are a number of reasons why people use different modes of transport to get to work. These include the availability of affordable and effective public transport options, the number of motor vehicles available within a household, and the distance travelled to work. For the Biosphere, the main mode of transport to work is overwhelmingly as a driver of a private car at 60.4% compared with the national average of 65.6%; followed by worked at home (10.6%); passenger in car (4.5%); and walking or cycling (3.4%) - which are close to the national average.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2011.

### Did you know?

There are more than 450kms of public bikeways and walking paths throughout the Noosa Biosphere Reserve <sup>[1]</sup>. Together with an average annual temperature range of 17-25 degrees Celsius <sup>[2]</sup>, why not take the time to explore the Biosphere Reserve on foot or bicycle. It's great for your health and the environment. TravelSmart is a Council-run program focused on increasing use of alternative sources of transport and reducing our reliance on cars. For more information contact the TravelSmart Team on **5449 5169** or Noosa Visitor Information Centre on **5430 5000**.

Source: <sup>[1]</sup> Tourism Noosa

<sup>[2]</sup> Weatherzone via Bureau of Meteorology

### How we handle our waste

Managing waste is one of the most important things we can do to reduce our environmental impact as a householder. Simple changes to how we buy, use and dispose of items can help save money and reduce the amount of landfill waste. Last year, Noosa Waste Facility received 69,443 tonnes of waste, 22% of this waste was diverted from landfill and recycled.

Source: Sunshine Coast Council

### Did you know?

Noosa Landfill site has also recently installed a gas flaring system, which will reduce the amount of methane gas (CH4) that is released into the environment by burning it off as Carbon Dioxide (CO2). The facility is also home to the award-winning Brite Side Industries which is a Noosa Community Training Centre Inc enterprise to generate training and re-skilling opportunities for residents in the Noosa Biosphere Reserve. Brite Side Industries diverts and sells from landfill and potential landfill, items of a nature that can be repaired, modified or recycled while also training the region's long-term unemployed and establishing itself as a long-term self-sustaining business venture. For more information visit [www.nctc.com.au](http://www.nctc.com.au)

## We... think positively

### Business confidence

Business confidence is one of the lead indicators of economic performance. According to a survey of local Noosa businesses, confidence for the 6 months to April 2013 was strong with 69% of participants reporting a stable or improved business performance and 79% believing their business will perform better or stay the same in the next 6 months.

GENERAL BUSINESS CONFIDENCE					
	Much Weaker	Somewhat Weaker	About the Same	Somewhat Stronger	Much Stronger
How has your business performed over the LAST 6 months relative to the previous 6 months?	15%	16%	38%	26%	5%
How do you believe your business will perform in the NEXT 6 months compared with the last 6 months?	8%	13%	36%	36%	7%

Source: Boardroom Business, "Business Confidence Survey 2013"

### Did you know?

The Business Confidence survey has been tracking business sentiments on the Sunshine Coast with 12 surveys since 2008. Results are viewed by leading business groups and organisations as well as Sunshine Coast Council's Economic Development Unit to help decision makers gain a collective view of business sentiment across the region. For the latest information, go to [www.boardroombusiness.com.au/sunshinecoast](http://www.boardroombusiness.com.au/sunshinecoast)



## Gross Regional Product

Despite the 2008 financial crisis, businesses in the Noosa Biosphere Reserve are well positioned to take advantage of the recovery. The global recession impacted our region with the sustained growing demand for our goods and services interrupted. The ill effects of the production decline have echoed through businesses to test the resolve of owners and workers alike. In spite of the economic environment we retain resilient businesses, and the beautiful natural resources and the spirited community that previously sustained our growth. With around 2,460 (ABS, 2011) of our residents working in the accommodation and foods services, we are well placed to take advantage of the recovery in tourism.

BUSINESS PERFORMANCE IN DETAIL									
Noosa	2001	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
GRP \$'000,000	1,560	1,650	1,692	1,801	1,800	1,785	1,786	1,772	1,752

### Did you know?

While businesses believe that capital investment and staffing levels will predominantly remain unchanged or decrease over the next 6 months, there is also an expectation that profitability will mostly have a slight increase or no change. A positive sign for business in the Biosphere is the intention of 39% of Noosa businesses stating they were expecting profitability to increase over the next 6 months with 84% intending to keep or increase their staffing levels.

Source: Boardroom Business, "Business Confidence Survey 2013"



Photo: courtesy Sally Haxton



## We... join in

### Activities and events

Community activities and events contribute to the rich social fabric of our Biosphere Reserve. With more than 190 community and sporting groups across the Biosphere Reserve and more than 180 community events and celebrations held on public land in 2012, there is a rich diversity of activities and interests available to engage our local community as well as attract national and international visitors.

Source: Sunshine Coast Council Community Hub

### Did you know?

Noosa is home to international events year-round. From the Noosa Triathlon, that is Australia's largest, oldest and highest profile triathlon event to the Noosa International Food & Wine Festival; the Noosa Festival of Surfing; Noosa Longweekend and the Noosa Jazz Festival. Noosa Biosphere is a dynamic celebration of healthy, creative and vibrant living that is showcased to the world. [www.visitnoosa.com.au](http://www.visitnoosa.com.au)

Top Photo: courtesy Andrew Seymour

## Making a difference together

In the Noosa Biosphere we celebrate shared contributions to the advancement of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Program. The Partnership Program fosters alliances with community groups, organisations and businesses that share a common interest in conservation, education, sustainable development and the protection of Noosa Biosphere. To date there are 27 Noosa Biosphere Partner organisations across a range of sectors of our community including business, education, environmental, community, cultural, recreation and tourism.

Source: Noosa Biosphere Limited Partnership Program

### Did you know?

The Noosa Biosphere Reserve is also a popular place for international study groups to explore the harmonious relationship between people and place. Already in 2013, Noosa Biosphere has hosted groups of international students from Universities around the globe as well as welcoming guests from international organisations and other Biosphere Reserves. As part of an ongoing program, eight groups from the University of Georgia, Athens have visited in a two-year period, injecting an estimated \$700,000 into the economy. In addition, guests from Sheka Biosphere Reserve, Ethiopia; Kien Giang Biosphere Reserve, Vietnam; and students from the Netherlands and Indonesia have participated in study tours in 2013 as part of joint projects with University of the Sunshine Coast and Tourism Noosa respectively.

More information can be found at [www.noosabiosphere.org.au](http://www.noosabiosphere.org.au)

# We... create change

## Working Smart

Certification of businesses is one way for businesses to verify and promote their sustainability achievements. In Noosa those businesses that have achieved ECO certification or ecoBiz Partnership are our sustainability leaders. In 2013 we are proud to have 4 businesses who have achieved ECO certification for 10 products and 21 individual businesses that have achieved ecoBiz Partnership status.

Source: Eco Tourism Australia & ecoBiz – Sunshine Coast Council

### Did you know?

That by participating in a home or business eco certification program you are not only helping the environment you could also be saving money. For more information contact ecoBiz on **13 74 68** or Ecotourism Australia on **3252 1530** or register at [www.livingsmartqld.com.au](http://www.livingsmartqld.com.au)



## Living Smart

Every person in every household has the ability to make simple, effective and lasting changes towards sustainable living. Living Smart Homes originated in Noosa and has now expanded to the Sunshine Coast and Moreton Bay regions with an online learning program that helps households to reduce their energy, water, waste and transport and learn more about sustainable food, wellbeing, biodiversity and neighbourhoods. 224 households within the Biosphere are registered Living Smart members. 54 new members joined the program in the year to July 2013.

Source: Living Smart Program – Sunshine Coast Council

### Did you know?

Seven out of eight state primary schools in the Noosa region have school kitchen gardens to help educate children about growing, preparing and consuming food to fight the rise in obesity. More than half of these schools are supported by Slow Food Noosa – a local convivium that recently became a Noosa Biosphere partner. Another partner, Kin Kin State School, was recently awarded the 2013 Living Smart Glossies “Edible Landscape” Award for its kitchen garden program as part of the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation. The school’s program features 17 large garden beds, two orchards, a bush tucker garden, chook pen, worm farm, native bee hive and kitchen where food is prepared for the kids and the community using goodies from the garden.

Photo: courtesy of Kin Kin State School

# We... welcome others

## A Better Experience

“Welcome to Noosa” is an online training program developed by Tourism Noosa to help local businesses enhance their customer service and deliver memorable experiences for Noosa visitors and locals. The program was launched in May 2013 and more than 500 people have registered for the program with 300 participants already certified within the first two months.

Source: Tourism Noosa

### Did you know?

The Noosa Biosphere Reserve is special to many people for many different reasons. For some, it will be forever special as it is the place they choose to celebrate significant life events, in a stunning natural setting. Last year there were 417 weddings held on our beaches and in local parks. Some say it is the spirit of the Biosphere that brings people together! Tourism Noosa assists thousands of people each year to find a special place for their special occasion. [www.visitnoosa.com.au](http://www.visitnoosa.com.au)

Source: Tourism Noosa Research Report YE March 2013

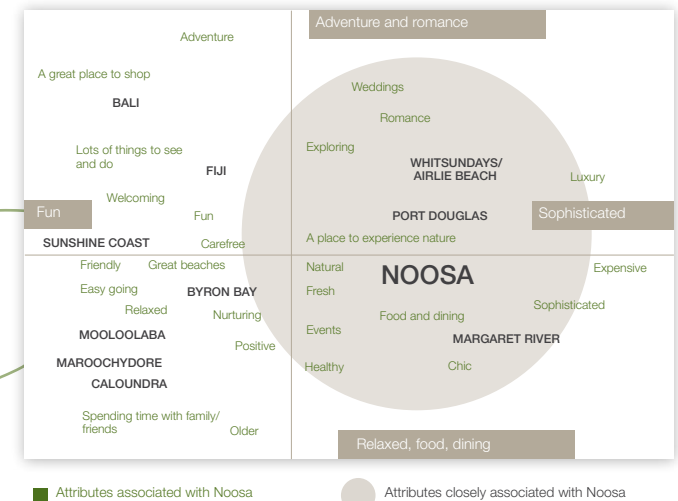
## A Richer Experience

Welcoming visitors to Noosa is a driving force of our economy and we are getting better at it each year. Noosa Biosphere welcomed near record visitor numbers in the 12 months to March 2013. We welcomed 2.5 million visitors from across the globe, who spent \$825 million in our local economy. The multiplier effect of tourism means that an additional \$990 million was circulated through our local community as a result of these visitors.

Source: Tourism Noosa Research Report YE March 2013

### Did you know?

People’s preference to have a holiday in Noosa has grown by 5% over the last 2 years. Consumers’ preference to visit Noosa is higher than destinations in our competitor set, including Port Douglas, The Whitsundays and Byron Bay. Noosa’s preference has grown due to our differentiation on experiences such as food & dining, nature, weddings & romance.



## We... foster creativity

### Support for art projects

Currently the Sunshine Coast Council and Arts Queensland support the professional development and employment of artists and arts practitioners and the development of quality art and arts practice through the provision of Regional Arts Development Fund grants (RADF). Within Noosa Biosphere Reserve there is a particular focus on 'Green Art' which celebrates and explores the environment of a local area, focuses on an aspect of natural heritage, highlights an aspect of environmental harm or explores concerns for the future while utilising low environmental impact processes. In 2013 over \$33,000 has been invested into the Noosa Biosphere Arts community through the RADF program.

Source: Regional Arts Development Fund – Sunshine Coast Council

### Did you know?

The Noosa Biosphere Art Prize for 2013 had a 'Wearable Green Art' theme with \$2,000 in total prize money. For details visit [www.noosabiosphere.org.au/artprize](http://www.noosabiosphere.org.au/artprize)



### International collaborations - Floating Land Festival

Noosa Biosphere's biennial Floating Land Festival is one of Australia's leading 'green art' events. In 2001 it was the first environmental art event program of its kind to be held in Australia and has since grown to be a world-renowned event. More than 44 artists and art groups from around the globe exhibited and conducted educational and workshop programs across a multitude of venues over the 10-day event. This year's event was held in conjunction with the global conversation at the international Balance-Unbalance Conference, hosted in the Noosa Biosphere and shared internationally through a range of storytelling platforms and online streaming.

### Did you know?

The International Balance-Unbalance 2013 conference brought together more than 150 people from 14 countries to consider the ways that the arts, science and technology could be used to confront some of the significant issues and challenges for our culture and environment. The conference included more than 100 presentations including keynote panels, papers, performances, installations, workshops and symposiums.



The inaugural Biosphere Art Prize was won by Bark Design who created the "Growth" installation for Floating Land 2013.

Photo: "Growth" created by Bark Lab



### The Methodology

The Noosa Biosphere Report Card is a snapshot of the Biosphere community across a number of indicators.

The Report Card only uses publicly available information, providing a high level of transparency and robustness. This has meant that in some areas the originally preferred measures were not available or the data could not be broken down to the Biosphere Reserve area. It is anticipated that future Report Cards will allow for more detail and analysis as the Noosa region regains Local Government Area status.

The indicators will be tracked over time to reveal whether the performance is improving or declining and highlight any strengths or weaknesses for the Noosa Biosphere community.

We welcome your feedback on this inaugural "State of the Biosphere Report Card".

*DISCLAIMER: While every effort has been made to source data from reliable sources, the data and/or any associated analysis or commentary should be viewed as general in nature. Noosa Biosphere Limited does not warrant the accuracy of the information contained within and accepts no liability for any loss or damage that may be suffered as a result of reliance on this information, whether or not there has been any error, omission or negligence on our behalf.*

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September 2013

### Acknowledgements

The State of the Biosphere Report Card was driven by a Steering Committee representative of each Noosa Biosphere Limited (NBL) Board.

Thanks goes to the organisations and partners who have assisted in providing data for this report including Sunshine Coast Council, Tourism Noosa, NEIER, Boardroom Business and the ABS.

Special thanks to Sue Davis, Ben McMullen, Mary Jane Weld, Carolyn Beaton, Ross Waldron and the project team (Deb Caruso, Cath Withyman and Heather Smith).

NBL has taken due care in preparing this document. However, noting that data used for analyses has been provided by third parties, NBL gives no warranty to the accuracy, reliability, fitness for purpose, or otherwise of the information.

Top Photo: courtesy Suzanne Lowe





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For further information please visit

[www.noosabiosphere.org.au](http://www.noosabiosphere.org.au)

[www.facebook.com/NoosaBiosphere](https://www.facebook.com/NoosaBiosphere)

or tune into 'Voices of the Biosphere' on

Noosa Community Radio 101.3FM

every Friday 10am until noon

or livestream at [www.noosacommunityradio.org](http://www.noosacommunityradio.org)

