



Queensland Greens Regional Strategies for addressing the economic crisis, and creating a sustainable, low carbon Green economy and Green Jobs

The “business as usual” and piecemeal economic, energy, industry and jobs model of the Labor and Liberal National Parties has contributed to the present crises facing Queensland and this region, and offers no effective or lasting solutions to these matters.

The construction, urban development, retailing, commercial, tourism and hospitality, manufacturing and services industry sectors in this region are all highly exposed to cyclical downturns such as the present one, while the post-secondary education sector is affected by rationalisations and under-resourcing, and the agricultural sector is subdued following the collapse of the sugar industry and changes to Golden Circle operations.

The Greens propose the following comprehensive, integrated Green economy and Green jobs strategy. It will enable business, workers and students, in this region, to weather the financial and economic crisis. It will enable them to transition to a more sustainable, low carbon economy in which there is greater jobs diversity, security and resilience. It will place us in a strong position to face cyclical downturns, major setbacks in the rural industry, the need for urgent action on climate change and emerging issues such as “peak oil”.

Construction, urban development and transport industries

Significant, secure Green business and jobs opportunities arise if the State Government and Regional Councils introduce effective requirements and programs for :

- accelerated provision of Public Transport Infrastructure and Services, Active Transport Infrastructure, and in the maintenance of infrastructure and public transport vehicles
 - in particular the CAMCOS rail project, the rail line duplications north of Caboulture, and the Coast Connect bus project should be commenced as soon as possible, funded in part by abandoning or postponing unsustainable road projects
 - the Greens proposal for free public transport for youth, students and the aged will provide the critical mass necessary to support new infrastructure and better services, which in turn will increase demand from other sections of the community.
 - constructing extensive bicycle networks and pedestrian pathways provides other travel options, as well as recreational and public health benefits
- water and energy audits
- ensuring new urban development is at least 80% water self-reliant and has climate change resilient and biodiversity supportive native vegetation landscaping
- installing water and energy saving devices and appliances; rainwater tanks and other water stores; ceiling, floor and wall insulation materials; solar hot water systems and other energy efficient hot water systems (such as heat pumps and instantaneous gas); and solar PV and other renewable electricity generation equipment
- increased levels of trade training and start-up support for business creation, and
- ensuring that businesses do not trade insolvently.

Renewable Energy Production and Distribution

Creating new Green business and job opportunities through developing:

- Small scale power generation and local power distribution networks arising from Federal, State and Regional Government solar PV panel installation programs for residential buildings and many commercial and industrial buildings. Providing incentives such as a “Gross Feed-In Tariff”.
- Larger scale renewable power projects that feed into the electricity grid including:
 - (i) establishing small gas-fired power plants using methane captured from garbage landfills and sewage treatment plants (or local gas pipeline distribution of captured methane if power generation is not practicable or environmentally acceptable).
 - (ii) solar thermal power generation projects funded in part by saving \$140M by not building the contentious Powerlink power-line at Eumundi and Eerwah Vale, and future planned extensions as far as Glasshouse..
 - (iii) renewable biomass and combustible waste materials Green energy power plants that are integrated with other industries and / or delivering waste heat to other co-located industries.(*)

(* Possible sources of biomass include: combustible agricultural wastes e.g. sugar cane bagasse, macadamia nut shells, ginger factory wastes; high volume biomass crops such as bamboo; genuine wastes and thinnings from hardwood forest and hard and softwood plantation operations and sawmills; vegetation cleared as part of urban land development; combustible wastes collected from forest floors in lieu of control burns; combustible urban vegetation matter – food wastes and garden and landscaping maintenance wastes – all of which would in future be collected in separate garbage bins collected by the regional councils; combustible paper, cardboard etc wastes that are not recyclable for some reason (including inadequate demand from recycling industries); combustible construction wastes – the construction and commercial waste collection industries would in future be required to separate combustible construction wastes from non-combustible wastes e.g. in separate hoppers; combustible materials separated out at landfills e.g. timber doors, furniture ; sewage treatment plant sludge.)

Reinventing the cane industry

Given the success of such projects in northern NSW, reinventing the cane industry as a renewable Green electricity producer is highly prospective, especially if the generation plant is supplemented with other types of renewable biomass materials and combustible wastes available within the region. Sugar cane juice could be produced rather than sugar as in the past, which could be sold to food processing industries or used as a feedstock for alcohol or bio-fuel production.

Sustainable Bio-fuel industry possibilities include:

- large scale production of bio-fuels from extensive plantings of sugar cane or crops like the high oil content native plant, pongamia pinnata, that is currently being trialled
- smaller scale production e.g. from waste vegetable oils and fats.

Green Businesses and Jobs in Sustainable Agriculture and Forestry and Allied Rural Industries

The State Government and the Regional Councils should jointly fund a comprehensive Sunshine and Cooloola Regional Rural Futures Strategy, with a report by the end of 2010, and then back this up with implementation funding and agency support. The Departments of Primary Industries and Natural Resources Management should play a major role, but the project should be a cross-sector and multi-agency process with significant public consultation and input opportunities to ensure all options are thoroughly assessed. This comprehensive strategy is long over-due.

Any future sustainable, low carbon economy in this region will involve the adoption of sustainable agriculture and forestry practices and greater regional self-sufficiency in all or most sectors of food, timber and fibre production, and in certain commercial cash crops.

There are enormous business and jobs opportunities in R & D, product development, manufacturing and sales, marketing, and in professional and technical extension services associated with the diversification and value adding processing of agricultural and forestry production; adopting water and energy efficiency design, products, and practices; and soil fertility and waste management.

Reinventing the cane industry has already been mentioned. Other prospective areas include :

- government and private sector funded commercial hardwood and softwood plantations and re-vegetation projects for biodiversity conservation purposes, all of which may benefit from future carbon sequestration credits to add to their viability
- other commercial fibre and biomass products such as bamboo and industrial hemp
- diversified horticultural crop production and processing
- niche markets such as organic food and gourmet products, including dairy products
- bio-char industry based on a variety of biomass and other combustible materials (an industry that can contribute to improving soil fertility in sustainable agriculture, but also has markets in the nursery industry and for home gardens)
- initiatives to increase the markets for clean, locally produced foods and processed foods – including fostering “community-supported agriculture”; establishing a network of permanent and regular farmers markets throughout the region; and seeking agreement with the major retail chains about abandoning their unsustainable centralised buying and distribution systems, and transitioning to purchasing from local, sustainable agricultural producers.

New Green businesses and jobs in Waste Management

A comprehensive review of present waste strategies and programs has recently been initiated by the Sunshine Coast Regional Council. There is a clear need for far more sophisticated systems to collect, separate, reuse, recycle and sensibly dispose of materials in the waste stream, which then creates a diversity of significant new Green industry and Green jobs opportunities. E.g. we expect the waste review to identify materials suitable for renewable electricity generation, bio-fuels production and the bio-char industries mentioned above.

Diversifying and re-focussing the Tourism and Hospitality Industries

The State Government and the Regional Councils need to jointly fund a comprehensive Sunshine and Cooloola Regional Sustainable Tourism and Hospitality Industry Strategy, with a report by the end of 2010, and then back this up with implementation funding and agency support. This Strategy should dovetail with the proposed Regional Rural Futures Strategy.

The economic crisis, rising transport costs, and the low Australian dollar mean that the industry will need to focus more on Australian domestic tourism and day-tripper tourism within the S. E. Queensland Region. Elements of the proposed Strategy will benefit the industry once international tourism recovers.

There may be opportunities to develop one or more tourist theme parks and other types of tourism infrastructure in appropriate locations, provided social and environmental impacts are acceptable.

However, the main focus should be on expanding sport, recreation and eco-tourist parts of the industry that build on the natural environmental attributes of the region, including its landscapes, rural industries, waterways and the sea.

Specific proposals include:

- creating a network of Great Walks walking trails across the region
- establishing a range of accommodation and hospitality services that complement the trails
- developing farm stay and health farm opportunities
- developing adventure and extreme sport tourism
- developing a wider range of sporting, recreational and cultural annual events
- developing specialised eco-tourism such as birdwatching or wildflower viewing
- expanding scuba diving industries through declaring a series of small “look - no take” Marine Parks between the Great Sandy Straits and the Moreton Bay Marine Park, and

- developing organic and gourmet food markets, outlets and eateries in attractive coastal and hinterland locations.

Green businesses and jobs in the Tertiary Education sector, University-related research and development – Knowledge-based industries are the future!

There is enormous scope for public and private sector R & D industries, manufacturing and services industries in the health, medicine, aged care, sporting, bio-medical and bio-technology fields. These can either be co-located at the University or the proposed new Kawana Hospital or at nearby industrial and commercial zoned areas.

This assumes the new Kawana Hospital is built, it or another regional hospital becomes a teaching hospital, and the Sunshine Coast University continues to provide courses training nurses, psychologists, community mental health workers, dieticians, sport and exercise scientists, occupational therapists, bio-medical scientists, laboratory technologists – and possibly medical doctor training in future.

University training of health educators, dieticians and laboratory technicians suggest there are also R & D opportunities and a variety of businesses and jobs dealing with public health education, food technology and processed food product industries. The latter should dovetail with the diversified sustainable agriculture sector, especially in niche markets such as organic and gourmet products.

The growing population of the Coast and rationalisation within the tertiary education sector mean that a wider range of professional and technical education may be commenced at the University e.g. civil, electrical, waste management, and systems engineering, which in turn can foster development of public and private sector R & D, manufacturing and services in these fields – including various renewable energy fields.

Specialised design and manufacturing industries

Specialised design, manufacturing and services relate to the sport, recreational and lifestyle characteristics of the Coast e.g. design and/or manufacture of sporting and casual clothing, footwear, and boating, water sports and fishing equipment.

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