

## **Boost for Douglas in Shire's new planning scheme**

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A NEW planning scheme aims to manage growth, protect the environment in the Douglas Shire and retain a lively tourism buzz in Port Douglas. The 2018 Douglas Shire Planning Scheme will shape the region's economic prosperity and environmental sustainability for the next 10 years. The landmark scheme was adopted at the Ordinary Council Meeting yesterday.

Mayor Julia Leu said the policy strikes a balance between supporting economic progress and reducing impacts on the environment.

"This is a strategic and forward-thinking scheme that protects our valuable assets in tourism, agriculture and outstanding biodiversity values," she said. A 40-day public consultation period netted 642 submissions that were considered in the new scheme.

Mayor Leu said the plan provides flexibility and will inject local Douglas character.

"Our residents have a heightened sense of ownership of our natural environment and we will work to retain these unique characteristics," she said. "Development will be carefully planned so Port Douglas can retain its lively tourism buzz as a premier destination."

"Our World Heritage-listed Wet Tropics rainforest attracts travellers from all over the world and strengthens the focus on nature-based tourism."

"Douglas Shire is internationally recognised as a high biodiversity hotspot and this is something Council is determined to preserve."

Mayor Leu said the plan would protect rural areas from unsuitable land uses and further fragmentation.

"We have strengthened measures to support our agricultural sector and developed opportunities to add value to primary produce and diversify the base income of our farmers," she said.

A letter from the State Government congratulated Council for developing a planning scheme that is "one of the first in Queensland to genuinely attempt to reflect the aspirations of the shire's traditional owners".

The rights and interests of native title land holders are recognised through provision for Indigenous housing and seasonal camps on Aboriginal Freehold land within the Return to Country local plan code.

The new Douglas Shire Planning Scheme will commence on January 2 next

year and will be available for viewing online at Douglas Shire Council's web page next month.

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