

Atmosphere

- Queensland's air quality meets national air quality standards with only a few exceptions each year.
- While smog events are rare, Brisbane is believed to have the highest potential for photochemical smog of any major Australian city due to climatic and geographic factors.
- Low-visibility days due to pollution in Brisbane are less frequent now than in the 1980s because of the closure of power stations in the metropolitan area and the ban on domestic backyard incinerators.
- Levels of nitrogen dioxide in south-east Queensland have not exceeded national goals since 1978. No discernible trend exists despite increases in traffic volume suggesting that advances in emission controls for motor vehicles are matching increases in vehicle numbers.
- Motor vehicles and power stations are the major sources of the state's air pollutants, with Brisbane and Gladstone airsheds most affected.
- The introduction of unleaded petrol and lower lead content in leaded fuel have greatly reduced lead pollution levels, which are now consistently below national guidelines.
- Transport activity produces around 70 percent of the air pollution in the south-east region.

Land

- Almost 35 percent of our land area has been cleared of native vegetation since European settlement.
- Queensland's land mass and its numerous coastal islands cover approximately 173 million hectares. Land use is dominated by grazing and cropping which utilise 89 percent.
- About 73 000 hectares of land have been disturbed by mining activities with about one-third of this area rehabilitated.
- Land resources are much better managed than in the past — some farmers have adopted soil conservation measures, mining operations are now required to rehabilitate land and overall there is better urban and regional planning.
- Community-based land management delivered through Landcare and catchment management groups has become a key focus but still there is a long way to go controlling noxious plant and animal species and learning to manage grazing in an ecologically sustainable manner.
- Main pressures affecting land and soils are vegetation clearing, mining, urban development, agriculture and introduced species.



Land (continued)

- Fertilizer use in Queensland is estimated at 400 000 tonnes annually.
- Soil erosion affects 80 percent of Queensland's cultivated land. In grain-growing areas the average soil loss can be as high as 60 tonnes per hectare a year.
- Erosion hazard is extremely high around Cairns, Mackay, and the Sunshine Coast hinterland.

Inland waters

- Queensland uses a greater proportion of recycled water and grey water in gardens than other States.
- Current water supplies cannot reliably meet the projected requirements of the mining and agriculture industries.
- At least 80 percent of wetlands in areas affected by intensive agricultural activity and urbanisation have been seriously degraded. Overall, grazing is the most widespread threat to wetlands and their catchments.
- Queensland taxpayers spend more than \$30 million a year on sediment control measures and repairing damage from urban soil erosion.
- The quality of water in our rivers is poor at times, especially after rainfall, with some rivers suffering excessively high levels of sediments and nutrients. These problems are mostly related to grazing and cropping activities and can affect inshore and reef ecosystems.
- Water extraction rates from some rivers and groundwater sources in Queensland's southern and eastern areas are considered to be unsustainable.

Coastal zone

- Development pressures from agriculture, urbanisation, tourism, industry and fishing affect several coastal areas in the south-east, Hervey Bay, Gladstone and the Cairns District.
- Key seagrass habitats are being lost although the total extent of this is unknown. Mangrove habitat is fairly stable.
- In North Queensland 9300 hectares of freshwater wetlands have been cleared over the last four decades in the Russell, Mulgrave, Moresby and Johnstone River catchments, largely for agricultural development.
- Vegetation clearing is highest in the south-east local authorities of Logan, Redlands, Caboolture, Pine Rivers, Brisbane and Maroochy.
- Broad acre clearing for pasture and grazing has been extensive in many central coast catchments, particularly those of Fitzroy, Don and Burdekin Rivers.
- The dominant land uses in coastal catchments are grazing (86 percent), timber (7 percent), crops (3 percent) and urban (2 percent). Areas classed as pristine account for 2.5 percent.
- On the Mackay coastal lowlands, only 7 percent of original dry land plant communities remain.



Energy resources

- Per capita energy usage in Queensland is increasing and is higher than the national average.
- Nearly all our energy comes from non-renewable fossil fuels.
- Renewable energy resources remain largely undeveloped with the exception of some solar, wind energy and bagasse use.
- Queensland produces relatively high greenhouse gas emissions due to its reliance on fossil fuels.
- Consumption of natural gas has more than doubled in the past decade.

Biodiversity

- Queensland has high levels of biodiversity compared with other states but is losing it quickly mostly due to clearing and fragmentation of bushland habitat.
- The accelerated National Parks Acquisition Program which began in 1990 to secure a representative protected area reserve system has been beneficial. Today Queensland has just over 7 million hectares of protected areas (4 percent of the State) up from 4 million hectares in 1990.
- Of Queensland's 1085 regional ecosystems, 10 percent are classified as endangered and a further 22 percent are of concern.
- Extinctions of 21 plant and 6 animal species are believed to have occurred since European settlement.
- The main impediment to more sustainable management of our biodiversity is a lack of information about it. Regular state of the environment reporting aims to rectify this.
- Moreton Bay area has lost up to 20 percent of its mangrove forests since European settlement and around 11 percent of the saltmarsh between 1974 and 1987.
- Overgrazing by domestic, feral and native animals is a major contributing factor to widespread deterioration and degradation of 85 million hectares or 58 per cent of native grasslands.
- Queensland has at least 1166 introduced plant species, 19 species of mammals, 11 birds, 11 fish, 2 reptiles and 1 amphibian which have established breeding populations and become naturalised.

Human settlements

- Between 1986–96 Queensland's population increased by 27.2 percent. This 2.4 percent annual growth rate was the highest experienced by any Australian State or Territory for that decade.
- The most widely reported form of pollution affecting the community is transport noise.
- 87 percent of Queenslanders travel to work by car.
- Waste generation (including domestic, industrial and commercial) for Queensland is estimated at 806kg per person each year.



Human settlements *(continued)*

- Over the next 20 years a total of 7.4 percent of cane and cropping land in the Sunshine Coast and Cairns districts is likely to be lost to urban development.
- Opportunities to reduce energy consumption through the choice of energy efficient appliances or household design are not widely exploited.
- Domestic water usage in Brisbane declined markedly between 1995 and 1998 due to behavioural changes associated with the introduction of water meters and water pricing policies.
- Overall population is good and life expectancy is increasing but there are significant health variations in urban and rural areas and between indigenous and non-indigenous communities.
- Most Queenslanders rely on mains water for their water supplies and are satisfied with the quality of their drinking water.

Cultural heritage

- At March 1998 the Queensland Heritage Register listed 1059 places permanently or provisionally.
- Some progress has been made to identify our cultural heritage, both indigenous and non-indigenous, but its protection is limited by failure to identify and recognise the significance of cultural heritage places.
- Urban character areas and buildings continue to be lost to development and a more coordinated state strategy is needed.
- The inventory of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage places is not comprehensive.
- Of the 936 ships known to have sunk off the Queensland coast, 847 are protected by the Commonwealth's Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976. The Queensland Museum knows the locations of 48 shipwrecks and has surveyed 37.
- Only four indigenous languages remain strong in Queensland and nine are severely threatened.

Community Awareness

- Most Queenslanders are concerned about environmental problems but between the period 1992–1998 the number of people who reported their concern for the environment decreased from 74 percent to 67.5 percent. Community concern does not appear to be translating into action.
- 39 per cent of Queenslanders felt there is not enough information available on the environment.
- Recycling continues to receive widespread community support — the number of households reporting they did not recycle fell from 18.1 percent to 7.9 percent between 1992 and 1996.
- Numbers of community based landcare groups increased from 107 in 1991–92 to about 250 in 1997–98.
- By 1996, 26 local Catchment Co-ordinating Committees were operational, covering 89 percent of the state.