With head, heart and land:
Integration of community work and environmental planning in three north Queensland local government authorities

Douglas Shire Council
Mackay City Council
Townsville City Council

Alice Maree Roughley

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor Of Philosophy of
The Australian National University

November 1998
I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or other institution of tertiary education. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

Alice M. Roughley
November 1998
Acknowledgments

I began this research in 1994 while working in the Department of Social Work and Community Welfare at James Cook University North Queensland. Once I had convinced the university that the thesis belonged in two university departments rather than one, I was fortunate to have the support of supervisors, Dr. Tony McMahon, Peter Valentine and Dr. Mark Fenton in developing the study questions and research design. The interdisciplinary post graduate study group that formed with students from the Department of Tropical Environmental Studies and Geography on the Townsville and Cairns campuses included Lyn Wallace, Trevor Webb and Ros Anderson. Not only did we share ideas and vent frustrations in the early days of our theses but our trips between Cairns and Townsville were always an adventure. I look forward to reading their completed theses and sharing mine with them as we combine thoughts and continue to contribute to each others’ learning.

Friends and colleagues in Townsville, Dominique Benzaken, Jane Thomson, Robyn Lynn, Heather Laurie, Barry Dun, and Anne and Jeremy Tager gave generously of their time and were genuinely interested in my project. When my computer and data base was stolen in 1996 after moving to Canberra, Jane Thomson phoned regularly from Townsville to make sure I didn’t lose the courage to continue. In Canberra, I have had encouragement and assistance from Zo Lowrie-Nunes, Anna Carr, Janis Birkeland, John Harris, Ed Wensing and Keith Mitchell. Friends and colleagues at the Urban Research Program and the Australian Catholic University have made this journey possible through their many forms of support. In particular, I am grateful to Morag McArthur, Kandie-Allen Kelly, Peter Camilleri, Rhonda Magill and Joanna Zubrzycki, at the Australian Catholic University.

Without the support of Patrick Troy at the Urban Research Program at the Australian National University, I may well have not recovered from the theft of my computer. Not only was Patrick sympathetic to my plight at the time but he has cultivated a dynamic intellectual culture of academic exchange and excellence of which I am fortunate and proud to have been part. The women of the Urban Research Program, Rita Coles,
Christine Cannon, Heather Grant, Coralie Cullen, Bette O'Brien and Susan Marsden have extended assistance, friendship and several enjoyable social interludes. I am especially thankful to Penny Hanley for editing the thesis meticulously. My supervisors, Dr. Nicholas Brown, Dr. Helen Ross and Dr. Brendan Gleeson have dedicated much time to discussion of my project and have tirelessly read the thesis and contributed a range of valuable insights from which I have learned a tremendous amount. The interdisciplinary supervisory panel enhanced my learning about different perspectives on my topic and about the research process in general. Throughout our discussions over the last two years, Nicholas has taken a genuine interest in the thesis and has contributed a much valued historical perspective which has assisted me in bringing greater depth to this research. I have greatly valued his sharp critique, and his support.

Townsville City Council, Mackay City Council, Douglas Shire Council, and the twenty-two research participants who made the study possible generously shared information, their time and their personal experiences upon which this study has been able to build possibilities for advancing local area planning towards ecological sustainability.

My family, my mother, Kevin, Pamela, Steevlie, and Sheree have never lost interest in my project. The expertise and wisdom of many years academic experience from my father-in-law, Rod was incorporated through his editing of three drafts of the thesis. Apart from the 'sociology jargon' that he, as a scientist, has at times found perplexing, he has given his stamp of approval. To my cherished partner, Colin Campbell and daughters Esther and Alex Roughley-Campbell, I dedicate this work. They have made sacrifices to allow me the time and space to pursue this work over five years. They have maintained interest and faith in the study itself and in my ability to complete it.
Abstract

Set in three local government authorities in north Queensland, Townsville, Douglas and Mackay, this study explores the extent to which community workers and environmental planners contribute to ecologically sustainable local area planning. The concept of ecological sustainability requires a balanced planning approach in order that the well-being of humans and the non-human environment are protected, yet the potential economic benefits promised by local development projects frequently override concerns about loss of areas with a high conservation value.

The approach taken by the three local authorities studied in this thesis, to planning the future of their areas is significant in its potential to contribute to attaining ecological sustainability. Land-use planning decisions have affected and will continue to impact upon not only the aesthetics of the case study areas, but also inevitably short and long term issues of quality of life. There are many conflicting objectives in the councils because they endeavour to maintain employment opportunities, clean, safe environments and manage conservation of natural resources in the face of growing local populations.

In an effort to subscribe to ecological sustainability principles, local government has introduced integrated planning approaches. The attempt by local councils to understand the theoretical context for applying integrated planning remains formative. This thesis in seizing the opportunity to document the early experiences of integrated planning so that they may be built upon, details the contribution of community work and environmental planning to ecological sustainability. The contribution of community work and environmental planners is vitally important if a balance between environmental protection and social well-being is to be attained.

The integrated planning model introduced by the Australian Local Government Association in 1993 provided a structure for a more interdisciplinary local area planning approach with a more integral role for community workers and environmental practitioners. However, the model did not offer an adequate conceptual framework to guide ecologically sustainable planning practice. This study argues that to attain ecological sustainability through local area planning, an understanding of the competing
interests of people and the environment in planning decisions must be acknowledged. Further, a more ecocentric planning approach aimed at ecological sustainability will require a sharing of knowledge, skills, values and power across local government work areas to ensure shared responsibility for local area planning.

Community workers and environmental planners with their diverse and complementary bank of knowledge and skills have a significant contribution to make to local area planning but were marginalised in the three councils. Enhancing their involvement in ecologically sustainable local area planning will require removing a number of obstacles. This study has identified these impediments and as its substantial contribution to the integrated planning and ecological sustainability fields concludes with a new conceptual framework to guide interdisciplinary local area planning. The framework merges the best ethics and ideologies of both community work and environmental planning, two disciplines which have enormous potential together to positively influence local area ecological sustainability.

The roles of community workers and environmental planners in these case studies are presented according to their own descriptions as well as through the perceptions of other practitioners involved in local government planning. The data is viewed and analysed using an interpretive and critical social science methodology that is exploratory, interdisciplinary, reflective and participatory. It aims to generate theory about the three case studies whose issues will have relevance beyond themselves at a time when ecological sustainability is a serious consideration for all local government authorities.
## Contents

Statement of originality i  
Acknowledgments ii  
Abstract iv  
List of plates x  
List of figures xi  
List of boxes xi  
List of tables xii  
List of abbreviations xiii

### Introduction

Study objectives 4  
Study Context 5  
Research approach 6  
Three case studies 8  
Defining terms 8  
Thesis structure 13

### Chapter One: Ecological sustainability and integrated planning in local government

**Ecologically sustainable development**  
A background to ecological sustainability in local government in Australia 15  
Development 17  
Conflicts within ESD 19

**Integrated planning**  
Integrated planning defined 25  
Why associate integrated planning and ecological sustainability? 25  
Integrated planning in local government 27

**The ILAP model**  
ILAP methodology 31  
Council structures 31  
Potential problems with the ILAP model 32  
The pilot projects 34

**Summary** 36
Chapter Two: Townsville, Douglas and Mackay in profile

North Queensland politics in recent history
Emergence of the environmental movement in the north 39

Three places in profile
Townsville: 'Capital of the north' 40
Mackay: 'A wealth of natural resources' 50
Douglas Shire: 'The mountains meet the sea' 59

Ecological sustainability challenges the three councils face
Maintaining a vibrant economic image without causing environmental damage 67
Managing pollution and sustaining environments that support primary industries 69
Minimising tourism impacts upon north Queensland communities and sensitive environments 70
Managing newly acquired rural areas 71
Reconciling native title claims and ecological sustainability requirements 72
Ensuring affordable housing for local residents when land values are high around protected areas 72
Housing residents and managing the effects of increasing population and urban sprawl on environments with a high conservation value 73
Sustaining local employment as the public sector shrinks 73
Maintaining a global ecological sustainability focus which incorporates principles of access and equity between geographic areas as well as generations 74

Summary 75

Chapter Three: Three councils in a milieu of local government reform

The changing role of local government in Australia 77
Amalgamation 78
Effects of new managerialism 79

The three councils
Political context 82
Council missions 84
Organisational structures 86
Functional structures 88
Strategic directions 94

Summary 98

Chapter Four: An interdisciplinary study approach

Research methodology 102
Selecting councils to be involved in the study 105
Gaining access 107
Establishing the researcher-participant relationship 110

Study participants in profile 112
Research design 115
Research strategies 115
Data collection techniques 116
Managing, recording and analysis of research data 121
Truthfulness or trustworthiness of research design 124

Summary 126
# Chapter Five: The community workers

The nature of community work
- Existing definitions 129
- Community worker associations with community work and social planning 133
- Practitioner values 136

**Community workers in the organisational context**
- Physical location 137
- Community workers within the corporate structures of the councils 140
- Implications of organisational arrangements for effective integration of community work 144
- Integration policies and community work 146

**Community work practice in the councils**
- Tasks 147
- Practice ideology 152
- The contribution of the community workers to land-use planning 156
- Community work and ecological sustainability 158

**Perceptions of the community work role**
- The view of community workers 164
- Community work according to other planning practitioners 165

**Summary** 171

---

# Chapter Six: Beyond the three r's: the emerging field of environmental planning

**Why environmental planning** 175

**Three environmental planners**
- Mackay 176
- Douglas 177
- Townsville 179
- Educational background 180
- Environmental planning values 181

**Environmental planning in local government**
- Changing responsibilities 184
- Information needs 185

**The roles of the three environmental planners**
- The roles of the environmental planners 187
- Comparing the roles of the three environmental planners 194

**Perceptions of environmental planning**
- Environmental tasks undertaken in the three councils 200
- Responsibility for executing environmental tasks 203

**Factors which facilitate integration of environmental planners**
- Environmental protection legislation 209
- Local area strategic planning goals 210
- Community support 210
- Awareness of specialist environmental planning functions 211
- Organisational structure 212

**Impediments to Integrating Environmental Planning in the Three Councils**
- Organisational structures and strategic directions 213
- Awareness of specialist environmental planning functions 216

**Summary** 216
Chapter Seven: Integrated planning: What does it mean and who participates?

Integrated planning in the context of the three councils
  Study participants define integrated planning 220
  The broad objectives of integrated planning 221
  Participants in integrated planning 223
Community involvement in integrated planning
  Principles that guide community involvement in local area planning 224
Community involvement techniques employed in the councils
  Difficulties in employing participatory techniques and strategies 233
Summary 236

Chapter Eight: Impediments to integrated planning

Constraints to integrated planning
  External constraints to integrated planning 240
  Internal constraints to integrated planning 245
  Interdisciplinary constraints to integrated planning 249
Summary 255

Chapter Nine: With head, heart and land: A conceptual framework for ecocentric local area planning

Rationale for expanding ILAP
  Advancing involvement of community workers and environmental planners 257
  Locating the social/environmental balance in planning 257
A framework for ecologically sustainable local area planning
  Aims of the framework 261
  The ecocentric tenets of the framework 262
Problems the framework seeks to overcome
  The low status of community workers and environmental planners 264
  The economic growth imperative 265
  Accepting interdependence 267
Land
  Interdependence 269
  Intrinsic value 270
  Diversity 271
Head
  The knowledge base of community work 274
  The knowledge base of environmental planning 280
  The organisational context 283
Heart
Summary 289

Conclusion
  Study objectives revisited 290
  Community work and environmental planning roles 291
  Impediments and possibilities as major research findings 292
  Implications for further research 294
Appendices

Appendix 1  Endangered animal, marine and plant species in Douglas Shire 296
Appendix 2  Summary of Native Title Claims in Douglas, Townsville and Mackay 300
Appendix 3  Summary of public service positions lost in Townsville at February 1998 304
Appendix 4  Letter to councils requesting study access 305
Appendix 5  Research participant consent form 306
Appendix 6  Summary research proposal 307
Appendix 7  Interview schedule No. 1 311
Appendix 8  Interview schedule No. 2 315
Appendix 9  Codes of ethics of Australian social welfare professions 327
Appendix 10  Operational plans: Department Community and Cultural Services Townsville City Council 331
Appendix 11  Corporate Strategies: Department Community Services Mackay City Council 333
Appendix 12  Extract from the Code of ethics of the Environmental Institute of Australia 334
Appendix 13  Principles to guide public involvement in planning 336

References 337

List of plates

Plate 1  Anzac Park in Townsville during mid-afternoon 1
Plate 2  Green tree frogs shelter from the tropical summer in a suburban letterbox 14
Plate 3  Shopping mall in the main street of Mackay 38
Plate 4  Cane fields characterise Mackay 51
Plate 5  Visions 2008 conference advertisement 56
Plate 6  A cane tram passing the Douglas Shire Council building, Mossman, 1995 63
Plate 7  Protesters battle the bulldozers in the Daintree 66
Plate 8  Mackay City Council Administration Centre 76
Plate 9  Queenslanders on the side of Castle Hill, Townsville 101
Plate 10  Aboriginal dance festival in Laura, Cape York, 1989 128
Plate 11  Douglas Shire Council Community Development Office Mossman, 1995 139
Plate 12  Picnic Bay, Magnetic Island at late afternoon 174
Plate 13  Townsville City Centre by night 219
Plate 14  'Blue grass and pink granite' from Townsville Mall 238
Plate 15  A lone tree' in the Townsville Town Common Conservation Park 256
List of figures

Figure 1.1 Integrated local area planning model 30
Figure 2.1 The case study areas within Australia 41
Figure 2.2 Townsville-Thuringowa local government boundaries 44
Figure 2.3 Mackay-Pioneer local government boundaries 44
Figure 2.4 Areas of nature conservation significance in Townsville 45
Figure 2.5 Areas of nature conservation significance in Mackay 52
Figure 2.6 Mackay City: urban development pattern 58
Figure 2.7 Douglas Shire 62
Figure 3.1 Townsville City Council: organisational structure 90
Figure 3.2 Mackay City Council: organisational structure 91
Figure 3.3 Douglas Shire Council: organisational structure 93
Figure 9.1 Ecologically sustainable local area planning 260

List of boxes

Box 3.1 Townsville City Council mission statement 84
Box 3.2 Douglas Shire Council mission statement 85
Box 3.3 Mackay City Council mission statement 85
Box 5.1 Community worker comments on community development 134
Box 5.2 Community worker comments on social planning 134
Box 5.3 Strategic directions for Mackay City Council Community Development Section 143
Box 5.4 Strategic directions for the community development section of Douglas Shire 145
Box 6.1 Tasks assumed by environmental planners in Townsville, Douglas and Mackay 188
Box 6.2 Ecological sustainability perspective of elected member: Townsville 206
Box 6.3 Ecological sustainability perspective of elected member: Mackay 206
Box 6.4a Ecological sustainability perspective of elected member: Douglas 207
Box 6.4b Ecological sustainability perspective of elected member: Douglas 208
Box 8.1 A methodological planning dichotomy 250
List of tables

Table 2.1 Principal characteristics of Townsville City  
Table 2.2 Principal characteristics of Mackay City  
Table 2.3 Principal characteristics of Douglas Shire  
Table 2.4 Ecological sustainability issues for the three councils  
Table 3.1 Comparative income and expenditure of Townsville and  
Mackay City Councils and Douglas Shire Council  
Table 3.2 Organisational Statistics for Townsville, Douglas and Mackay Councils  
Table 4.1 Profile of study respondents  
Table 4.2 Summary of documents  
Table 5.1 Reactive community work roles  
Table 5.2 Anticipatory community work roles  
Table 5.3 Community worker perceptions of environmental planning tasks  
Table 5.4 Respondent perceptions of the community work role in Townsville  
Table 5.5 Respondent perceptions of the community work role in Mackay  
Table 5.6 Respondent perceptions of the community work role in Douglas  
Table 6.1 Environmental tasks of local government  
Table 6.2 Responsibility for environmental planning tasks in Townsville  
Table 6.3 Responsibility for environmental planning tasks in Mackay  
Table 6.4 Responsibility for environmental planning tasks in Douglas  
Table 7.1 The broad objectives of integrated planning  
Table 7.2 Interdisciplinarity within integrated planning  
Table 7.3 Participants in integrated planning  
Table 7.4 Public participation principles adopted by study participants  
Table 7.5 Public participation techniques and strategies employed by  
study participants  
Table 7.6 Consultation techniques and strategies employed by study participants  
Table 7.7 Difficulties experienced with involving the public in local planning  
Table 9.1 Models of welfare policy: Needs rights and distribution  
Table 9.2 Models of environmentalism
List of abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AASW</td>
<td>Australian Association of Social Workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIWCW</td>
<td>Australian Institute of Welfare and Community Workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALGA</td>
<td>Australian Local Government Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATSI</td>
<td>Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATSIC</td>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>the Building Better Cities Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>chief executive officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPIE</td>
<td>Department of Primary Industry and Energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EARC</td>
<td>Electoral and Administrative Review Commission (Qld.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIA</td>
<td>environmental impact assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPA</td>
<td>Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act 1974 (Cwlth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESBU</td>
<td>Executive Strategic Business Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESD</td>
<td>ecologically sustainable development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FNQ</td>
<td>far north Queensland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GBRMPA</td>
<td>Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILAP</td>
<td>Integrated Local Area Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPA</td>
<td>Integrated Planning Act 1997 (Qld)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGAQ</td>
<td>Local Government association of Queensland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRCSD</td>
<td>Mackay Regional Council for Social Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEDA</td>
<td>Planning, Environment and Development Bill 1994 (Qld.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAPI</td>
<td>Royal Australian Planning Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIA</td>
<td>social impact assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPT</td>
<td>Strategic Planning Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The EIA</td>
<td>The Environment Institute of Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNCED</td>
<td>United Nations Commission on Environment and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VRO</td>
<td>voluntary regional organisation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>