



**The  
Aesthetic  
and  
Lifestyle  
Significance  
of  
Mission Beach**



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## Acronyms & Abbreviations

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| EPA     | Environmental Protection Agency                                  |
| EPBC    | Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation           |
| FNQ     | Far North Queensland   |
| FNQ NRM | Far North Queensland Natural Resource Management                 |
| GBR     | Great Barrier Reef   |
| GBRMPA  | Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority                         |
| QNC     | Queensland Nature Conservation                                   |
| QPWS    | Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service                            |
| TA      | Tourism Australia  |
| TNQ     | Tropical North Queensland  |
| TQ      | Tourism Queensland   |
| UNESCO  | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| WHA     | World Heritage Area  |
| WTMA    | Wet Tropics Management Authority                                 |
| WTWHA   | Wet Tropics World Heritage Area                                  |

## Terms of Reference

### Background

Mission Beach has been identified as an area of outstanding natural and cultural significance in a number of studies, for its biodiversity and associated Indigenous, lifestyle and aesthetic attributes and values. These natural and cultural values are under pressure, particularly from residential and tourist development. Opportunities for improved environmental protection and restoration at Mission Beach are emerging, e.g. FNQ NRM's Mission Beach Habitat Network Action Plan, the Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport & Recreation's (DLGPSR) Far North Queensland Regional Plan 2025 and possible State Planning Policy on Cassowaries. In order to plan for the future at Mission Beach, a detailed understanding of the attributes and significance of the overall environment is necessary. Reports on the biodiversity, Indigenous cultural, and aesthetic/lifestyle significance of Mission Beach are required. These reports could be tabled in future planning exercises to enhance decision-making and could also be used to raise awareness in the wider community of the area's outstanding significance.

### Scope of aesthetic/lifestyle significance

Aesthetic/lifestyle significance encapsulates the understanding significance in the World Heritage criteria (vii), and in (e) and (g) of the national heritage criteria (Appendix Three). Aesthetic/lifestyle values are primarily those held by the residents of Mission Beach in regard to their chosen place of residence, arising from the landscape characteristics. Given the importance of the tourism industry in Mission Beach, those features and attributes that currently draw visitors to the area will also be important, particularly to the tourism operators in the area.

### Attributes

The "aesthetic/lifestyle features" may include the visual amenity of the beach with rainforest background, scenic routes, and "village" atmosphere. Other features may include the rural landscape, and the low density of human settlement. Surveys conducted of visitors to the area will be useful in developing an understanding of these attributes.

### Significance

The consultants will make statements about the significance of the aesthetic/lifestyle attributes of Mission Beach, using the standard approach of systematic comparative evaluation. The consultants are expected to use the criteria in Appendices One, Two or Three as reference points in developing the understanding of significance.



The consultants will consider the significance of Mission Beach in the following contexts:

Cardwell and Johnstone Shires,  
Wet Tropics Bioregion,  
Far North Queensland Region,  
Queensland,  
Australia,  
and the world.

The consultants will make a summary statement about the aesthetic/lifestyle significance of Mission Beach.

### **Mission Beach Study Area**

The Mission Beach study area has been designated by FNQ NRM Ltd as shown on the map in Figure 1, for the purpose of this project. The area incorporates the following natural and cultural boundaries:

- Johnstone and Cardwell Shire boundaries
- Sections of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park
- Wet Tropics World Heritage Area
- Tully, Murray, and Johnstone River Catchments

The Johnstone Shire community is made up of residents of whom 82.7% are Australian born, 12.5% overseas born (main countries are Italy, England, New Zealand, Laos, Thailand, India, Malta, Netherlands, Germany, PNQ, Philippines, Scotland) and 8.7% of whom are Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders. Similarly, the Cardwell Shire community, population of about 11,000, includes a number of groups of notable ethnic origin, particularly those with an Italian and Finnish background.



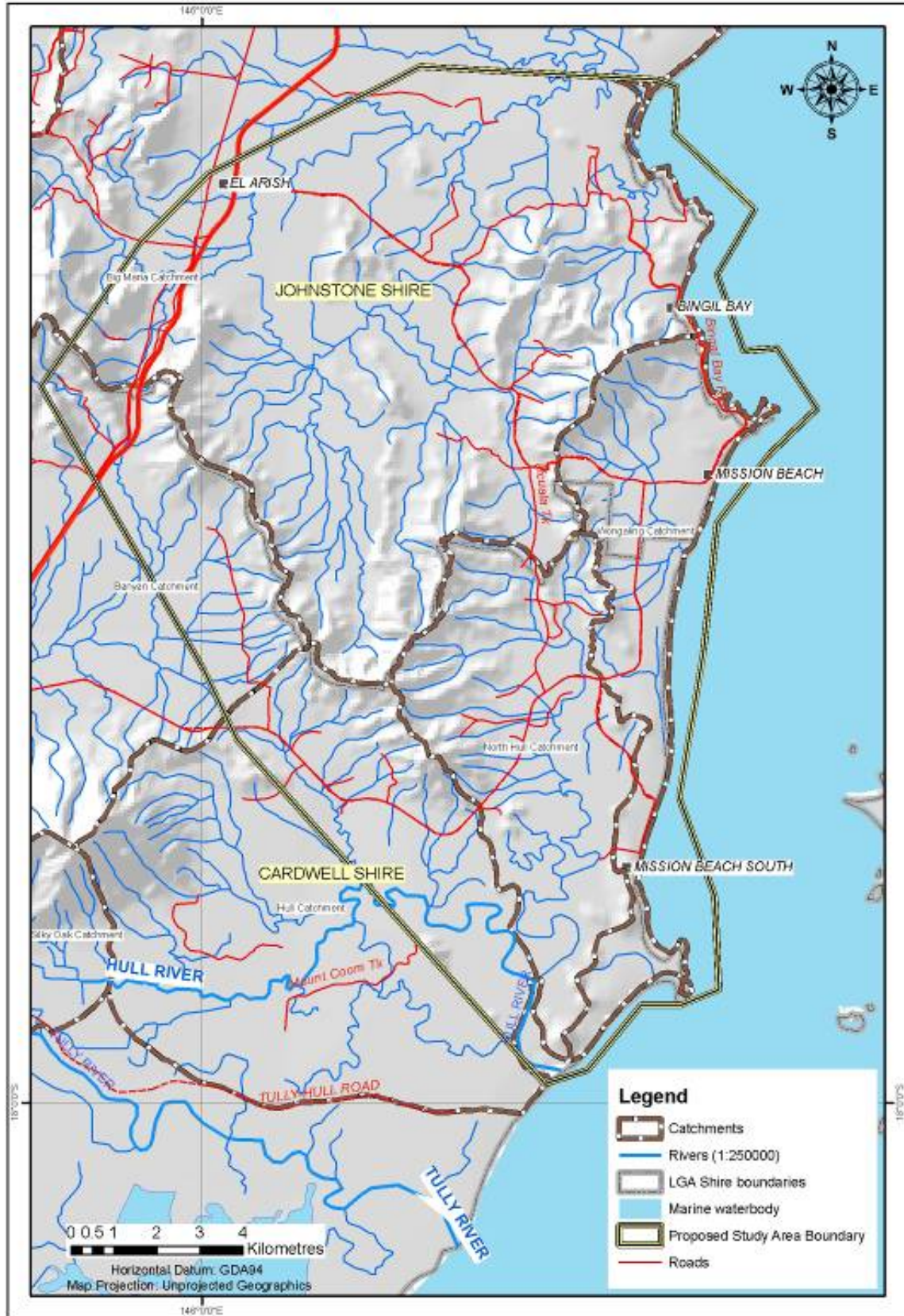


Figure 1: Proposed Mission Beach study area

## Summary Statement of Aesthetic/Lifestyle Significance

Aesthetic values include, but are not limited to, visual aspects of the region. As such, aesthetic values contribute to the lifestyle of a region, such as Mission Beach. They create a certain 'way of life', a 'human response', which is only possible because of these particular characteristics evident in the location.

The aesthetic/lifestyle significance of Mission Beach can be summarised as representing significant natural and cultural characteristics that are valued by residents and visitors alike.

Key words to describe these characteristics include:

- Images of 'tropical-ness'
- Rainforest landscapes
- Rare and endangered plants and animals
- Great Barrier Reef
- Coastal views and seascapes
- Beaches and islands
- Village-style atmosphere
- Lack of crowds
- Low-key urban development
- Low levels of traffic
- Peaceful, quiet atmosphere
- Environmentally-oriented community
- Multi-cultural community
- Agricultural landscapes and produce

The Mission Beach region contains a substantial proportion of two of Australia's World Heritage Areas - the Wet Tropics and the Great Barrier Reef. This feature alone establishes Mission Beach as one of the most important regions in Australia in terms of its aesthetic/lifestyle significance. The region is home to several rare and threatened species that give rise to the protection of natural resources. The habitats of these species are particularly valued since, in some cases, the Mission Region represents the most important natural resource for these native animals. The Southern Cassowary is one such species, and Mission Beach has adopted the Cassowary as its icon. The Ulysses Butterfly is also featured in a great deal of Mission Beach's promotional material.

Conservation of the natural attributes in the Mission Beach region has, in many cases, been a pivotal mechanism in the development of the region over time. Urban development and

infrastructure is softened by vegetation. Villages are separated by natural and rural landscapes. Essentially, the natural environment survives within the urban environment. But, the natural landscape prevails over Mission Beach.

Mission Beach is distinguished by its overall image of 'tropical-ness'. These special landscape features are elements of the Mission Beach lifestyle as evidenced in real estate advertisements, developer's brochures, tourism promotion, and even local government authority planning.

The Mission Beach region is home to many different cultures. Originally, only the Indigenous people inhabited the region. Later, Mission Beach was populated by migrants from Europe, Asia and the United Kingdom. This multi-cultural population has contributed to the lifestyle of the region by influencing the food, architecture, and the industries surrounding Mission Beach. Sugar cane, tropical fruits, wineries, bush tucker, and multi-cultural festivals have become key ingredients in the Mission Beach lifestyle.

The natural environment, native flora and fauna, and coastal landscapes are highly valued by the Mission Beach community. These attributes have been integrated into the social characteristics of the region. It is this natural environment, quiet and relaxed atmosphere that has been of the greatest influence in attracting artists such as painters, potters, and photographers to the region. Additionally, there is a strong presence of conservation groups who assist in maintaining the region's natural and lifestyle values. The strong nature-oriented and conservation attitude is evident in the community's values placed on the natural attributes of Mission Beach

The region's significance to the tourism industry in Queensland and Australia is acknowledged by the tourism authorities at all levels. Mission Beach is a key component of The Great Tropical Drive, as well as a reef, rainforest and island resort destination. The region is not subjected to mass tourism, so Mission Beach is a popular destination for resort-based and island-based visitors, backpackers, camping/caravanning and drive tourists, as well as an ideal 'escape' for residents from the nearby city of Cairns. The remarkable characteristics that these visitors seek are the myriad of natural features, the tropical coastal/island settings, the tropical climate and the peaceful village-style atmosphere of Mission Beach. These features, combined with Mission Beach's hinterland of rural landscapes and rainforested mountains make Mission Beach a special place for visitors to Tropical North Queensland.

Mission Beach is directly comparable to three other key tourism-based locations in Australia – Noosa Heads (on the Sunshine Coast in South East Queensland), Port Douglas (in Tropical North Queensland) and the Daintree. With respect to Noosa Heads and Port Douglas, the

comparability lays with the location's real estate development, tourism infrastructure and tourism values. However, Mission Beach is mainly contrasted against the early landscape qualities of these two locations, prior to their development and tourism booms. Moreover, both Noosa Heads and Port Douglas are no longer considered as 'sleepy coastal villages', whereas Mission Beach still maintains the image of a laid back, quiet coastal village. Alternatively, the Daintree is comparable to Mission Beach on the basis of its natural and scenic values, and the village-style landscape. However, the two locations differ somewhat, in that Daintree has significant iconic status in the tourism industry, hosting a considerable number of tours and day-tripping free/independent travellers. Consequently, Mission Beach is sufficiently diverse in its characteristics to be regarded as unique, with respect to its aesthetic/lifestyle values. In particular, the outstanding qualities are the relaxed, village atmosphere; low levels of development and people-traffic; and natural landscapes.

Worldwide, many of the sites designated by UNESCO that include WHA criteria (vii) are similar to the Mission Beach region in terms of natural values, are situated on the coast, and have village-like development. Consequently, it cannot be said that Mission Beach has specific or unique qualities as a location that distinguishes it from other WHA listed locations in the world that have the (vii) criteria. However, this characteristic does not diminish the fact that Mission Beach is a location with high natural values, particularly of World Heritage status. These specific natural values are central to the lifestyle in the Mission Beach region.

## 1.0 Aesthetic & Lifestyle Significance

### 1.1 Introduction

To begin the examination on the aesthetic/lifestyle significance, a number of parameters were drawn to guide the methodological structure of this research.

### 1.2 Definition for Aesthetic/Lifestyle Significance

The terms of reference (see previous section) advocate that aesthetic/lifestyle significance includes the following characteristics:

- values
- attributes
- significance

#### ***Aesthetic Values***

For the purpose of this project, the term *aesthetic values* has been taken as defined by Ramsay and Paraskevopolous (1993), being:

*“The response derived from the experience of the environment or of particular cultural and natural attributes within it. This response can be either to the visual or to non-visual elements and can embrace emotional response, sense of place, sound, smell and any other factor having a strong impact on human thought, feelings and attitudes.”*

It is important to note that aesthetic values include, but are not limited to, visual aspects of the region. As such, aesthetic values contribute to the lifestyle of a region, such as Mission Beach, by creating a certain ‘way of life’, provoking a human response, which is only possible because of these particular characteristics evident in the location.

#### ***Aesthetic/Lifestyle Attributes***

*Attributes* are features that contribute to the overall aesthetic/lifestyle significance of the region. Generally, these attributes can be categorised as either natural or cultural.

Natural attributes are physical characteristics represented by flora, fauna, water, topography and climate. Landscapes encapsulate these elements and may be termed according to their

specific elements. For example, coastal landscapes, agricultural landscapes, urban landscapes, etc.

Cultural attributes represent the human-related elements that include structures and development, activities, behaviours, feelings and other human elements. Cultural attributes are more complex than natural attributes, and as such require further explanation. The essential elements of culture can be summarized as behaviours, beliefs, customs, cognitions, feelings shared by groups of people, that are evident as values, symbols, rituals, and heroes, and are represented in objects and the environment (Altman & Chemers, 1980; Hofstede, 2001; Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1963; Tylor, 1872 (as cited in Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1963)).

### ***Aesthetic/Lifestyle Significance***

Aesthetic/lifestyle significance also encapsulates the understanding of significance in terms the World Heritage criteria (vii), and in (e) and (g) of the national heritage criteria. In respect of the Mission Beach region, the particular criteria that is relevant:

#### World Heritage Criteria - Natural

(vii) Superlative **natural phenomena** or areas of exceptional natural beauty or aesthetic importance

#### National Heritage Criteria

(e) The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in exhibiting particular **aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group**.

(g) the place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the **place's strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons**.

### 1.3 Conceptual Framework

Given the variety of characteristics associated with aesthetic/lifestyle significance, it was useful to construct a working conceptual framework to achieve the desired results for this project. In Figure 2, the components of the aesthetic/lifestyle are represented as natural/cultural, visual/non-visual, and World and National Heritage significance.

Each of the components in the framework will be considered in relation to the aesthetic/lifestyle significance of Mission Beach. It is anticipated that some components will be more obvious than others, and there may be the case where a number of components connect to form an overall characteristic of significance that is evident in the region. Moreover, many of these components are embedded in the Mission Beach landscape and in every aspect of the Mission Beach community.

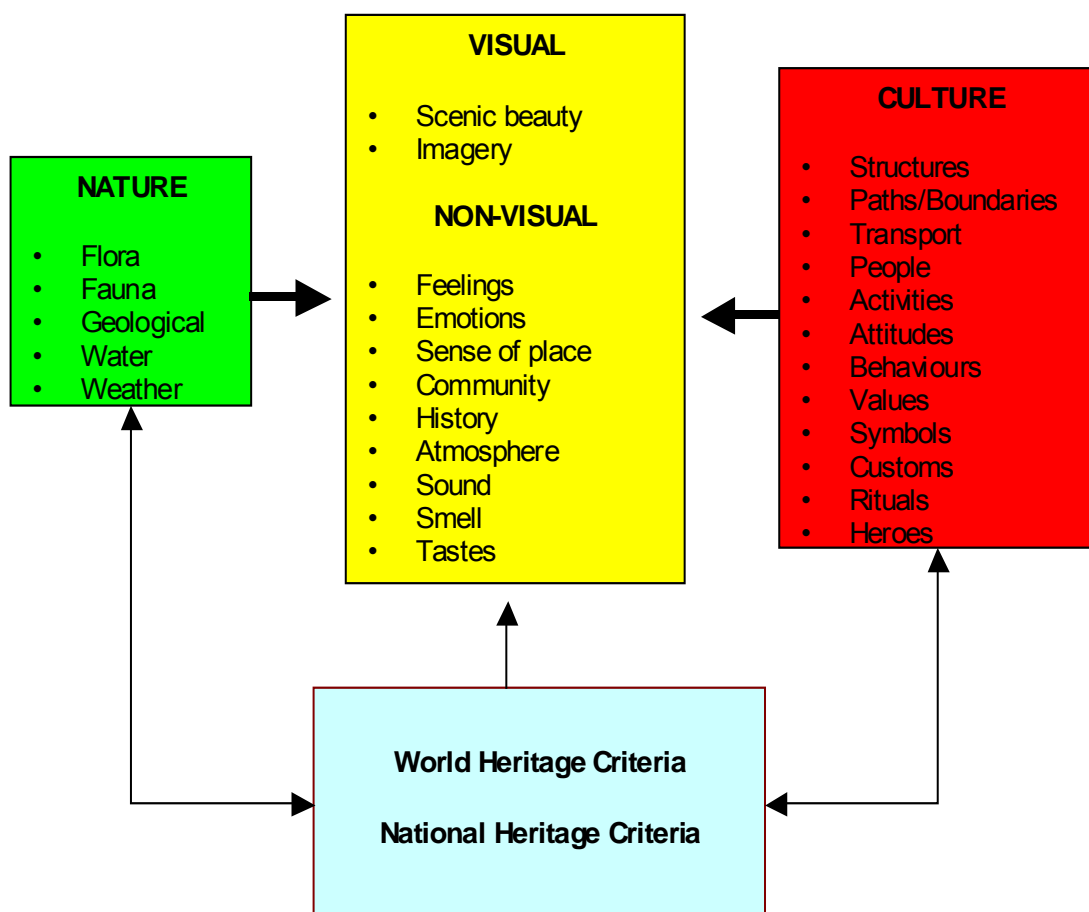


Figure 2: Components of Aesthetic/Lifestyle Significance



## 1.4 Limitations

There is, however, a word of caution when examining aesthetic/lifestyle values. As a noted geographer once stated, regarding perceptions of places, that:

*Man's view of geographic space is extremely varied, and the views of individual (men) are always in part unique. Entering into the particular outlook of a particular (man) are a host of experiences, prejudices, and desires, some widely shared, others quite specific to the individual (Gould, 1973, p. 184).*

As such, the examination of the aesthetic/lifestyle significance of Mission Beach has been limited to information published by various management agencies, government authorities, community organisations; and public documents such as newspapers and magazines. It does not include individuals' personal views or opinions on the region, other than those recorded in community/tourism surveys.

## 2.0 Aesthetic/Lifestyle Attributes

### 2.1 Natural Significance

The essence of aesthetic/lifestyle attributes is encapsulated in the natural significance of the region. Mission Beach contains high levels of biodiversity in both terrestrial and marine characteristics. As such, large portions of the region are listed under two World Heritage Areas – the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. Additionally, these areas include coastal and wetland zones that are valuable, and in some cases, also protected natural landscapes. The region also consists of a variety of geological, agricultural and tropical urban landscapes that contribute to the aesthetic/lifestyle significance of Mission Beach. Each of these attributes is discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

### 2.2 The Wet Tropics World Heritage Area



**Figure 3: The World Heritage Area Visitor Centre (Source: Julie Carmody)**

Both Cardwell Shire and Johnstone Shire areas of Mission Beach represent significant regions of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (Figure 3). The region includes the habitats of at least 483 species of plants that can be classified as rare or very restricted, and of these 83 are regarded as threatened. There are also 25 species of animals that are very rare, including the

Brush-tailed Bettong, the Spotted-tail Quoll, the Mahogany Glider (of which possibly only 2000 remain in the area) and the Southern Cassowary (recently listed as an 'endangered species').

Moreover, the Wet Tropics Conservation Strategy (WTMA, 2004) states that scenic landscapes and aesthetic values (under World Heritage Values) of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area "contribute greatly to the quality of life of the local community and to visitor experiences" (p. 26). The Strategy advocates the protection of "scenic values of wild rivers and gorges, mountain ranges, coastal views and spectacular features of the WHA" (p. 26). The Mission Beach region contains some of these attributes, namely mountain ranges, coastal views and other special features.

Additionally, the Mission Beach region is one of the three areas identified as being of regional significance for the conservation of biodiversity in the Far North Queensland Regional Plan 2010 (Far North Queensland Regional Planning Advisory Committee (FNQRPAC), 2000, p. 83). In particular, the lowland forests and corridors centred on Mission Beach (see Figure 4) represent the:

- *"Largest remaining lowland mosaic complex with rare and threatened communities. The 'last stand' of lowland forest;*
- *Largest remaining cassowary population in Australia. Vital for their survival; and*
- *Numerous rare and threatened species, and important corridor links. "*  
*(Weston & Goosem, 2004, p.120)*

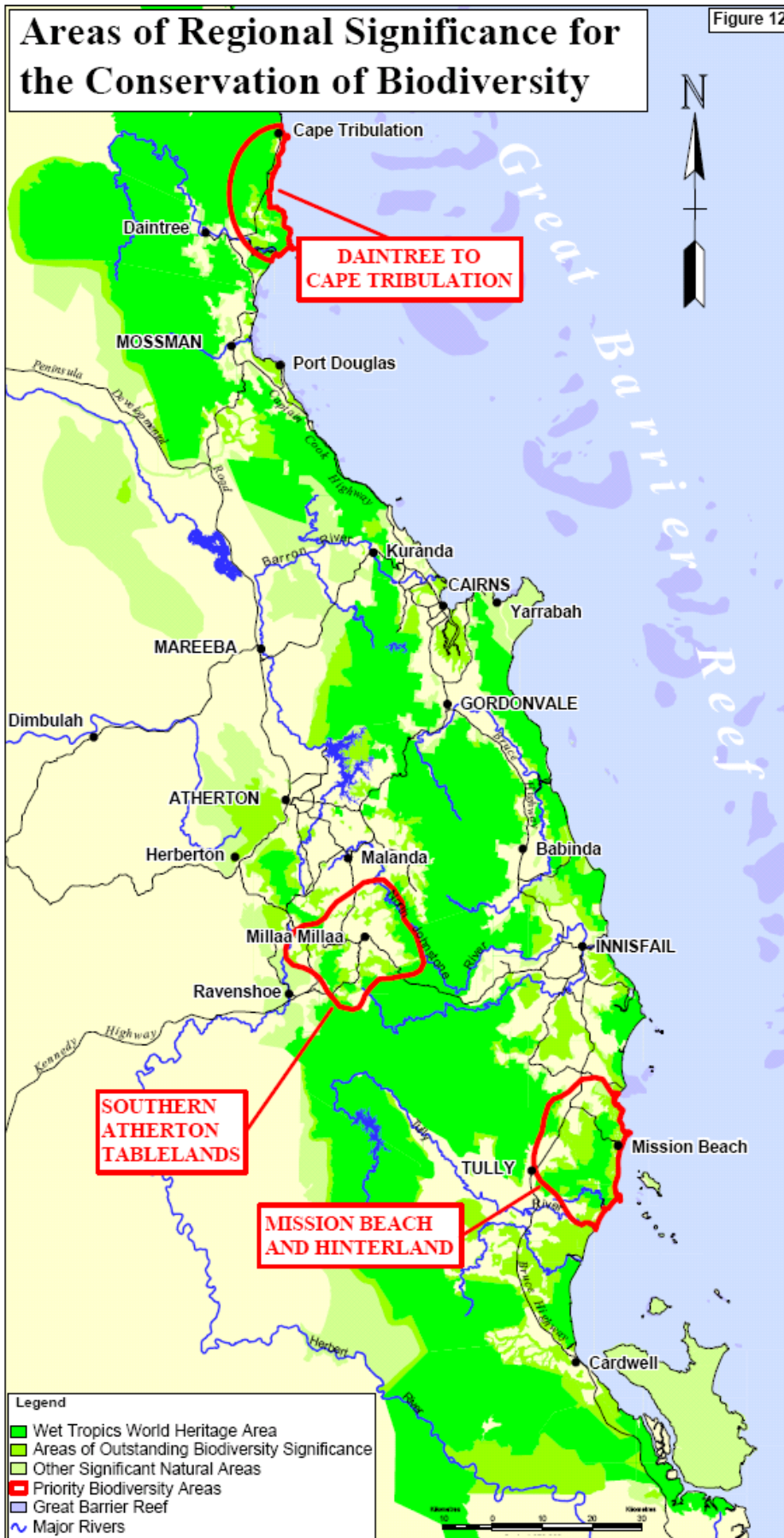


Figure 4: Map showing Areas of Regional Significance for the Conservation of Biodiversity (FNQ RPAC, 2000, p. 81)



## 2.3 Rare and Threatened Species

Rare and threatened (plant and animal) species are those that may be vulnerable to extinction, and are listed under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EBC) Act 1999 and Queensland Nature Conservation (QNC) Act 1992.

The Wet Tropics Bioregion contains a total of 98 animal species, many of which habituate in the Mission Beach Region (WTMA, 2004). They include cassowaries, mahogany gliders, spectacled flying fox and northern bettong, as well as bats, frogs and other native rainforest animals. A number of these species have become special symbols of the Mission Beach region.



### **Cassowary**

Mission Beach region has the highest concentration of cassowaries, therefore this region is of great importance to their survival. Cassowaries are vital to the life of rainforests as they assist in the lifecycle of over 150 species of rainforest plants (WTMA, 2006). Humans pose the greatest threats to cassowary survival, by way of unnatural feeding, destruction of habitat and traffic on roads (see road sign in Figure 5).

However, there are several conservation groups who are dedicated to cassowary survival. For example, the Garner's Beach cassowary rehabilitation facility, managed by the Australian Rainforest Foundation, works closely with Queensland Parks and Wildlife to ensure the survival of cassowaries in the Mission Beach region. The facility cares for sick, injured, and orphaned cassowaries; informs and educates the public about cassowaries; and provides on-site support such as cassowary feeding stations. (Australian Rainforest Foundation, 2007).



**Figure 5: (1) Cassowary Caution Sign (Source: Julie Carmody) (2) Cassowary on beach (Source: Melody Nixon)**



The cassowary is also the symbolic icon of Mission Beach. Cassowary symbols appear on architecture, artwork, postcards, promotional brochures, signage, etc. throughout the Mission Beach Region. For example, in Figure 6, the photograph shows the cassowary depicted in artwork on the C4 building.

**Figure 6: Cassowary in Art Work at Mission Beach (Source: Julie Carmody)**



### ***Ulysses Butterfly***

Ulysses butterflies (shown in Figure 7) are also special symbols of Mission Beach. They are featured in many of the logos, brochures and advertising material for this region. Ulysses can be seen in the tropical rainforests and even in suburban gardens. Their favoured food source for the Ulysses larvae is the *Euodia Elleryana* (WTMA, 2007), which is present in the natural vegetation in the Mission Beach region. While not considered rare or threatened, viewing the Ulysses butterfly is highly treasured by both residents and visitors alike in the region.

**Figure 7: Ulysses Butterfly (Source: WTMA)**

### ***Mahogany Gliders***

Mahogany gliders (shown in Figure 8) were presumed extinct until 1989 when they were rediscovered in the Wet Tropics region. Their main habitat consists of the tropical coastal lowland woodlands, which are found in fragmented pockets in the surrounding areas of Mission Beach, such as Edmund Kennedy National Park just south of Mission Beach (EPA, 2005).



Their rare status and natural appeal give Mahogany Gliders a special value to residents and visitors in the region. The conservation of both the species and its habitat is of significance, so much so, that “this glider has been the subject of a government program to buy back critical habitat for the species as land clearing is the greatest threat to the glider’s survival and most of its range falls outside the protective status of World Heritage” (WTMA, 2006).

**Figure 8: Mahogany Glider (Source: WTMA)**

## 2.4 Coastal Areas & Wetlands

The Wet Tropical Coast Regional Coastal Management Plan and Cardwell-Hinchinbrook Coastal Management Plan list the Mission beach region as a key coastal site of state significance for its natural (and cultural) values. Specifically, the Plans state that Mission Beach is one of 15 key coastal sites where special coastal management is important (Queensland Government, 2003b). The Plan also notes that the Mission Beach and hinterland area are recognised in the Far North Queensland Regional Plan as a ‘priority biodiversity’ area (p. 121).

A number of areas in the Mission Beach region have been identified in each of the plans as being of state significance for various reasons (see Figure 9). There are also several sections of the plans that specifically indicate the scenic/aesthetic values of Mission Beach, Wongaling and South Mission Beach, and the Family Islands (which are visible and a notable attribute of the Mission Beach landscape. These values are briefly described below:

***Mission Beach (including Clump Point):***

*Very high to high scenic landscape values i.e. rugged backdrop to the coast of rainforest clad hills and mountains with high natural integrity, combined with several vegetation-fringed beaches, vegetated rocky headlands, off-shore island and the present relatively low visual impact of coastal land uses. (Queensland Government, 2003b, p.121)*



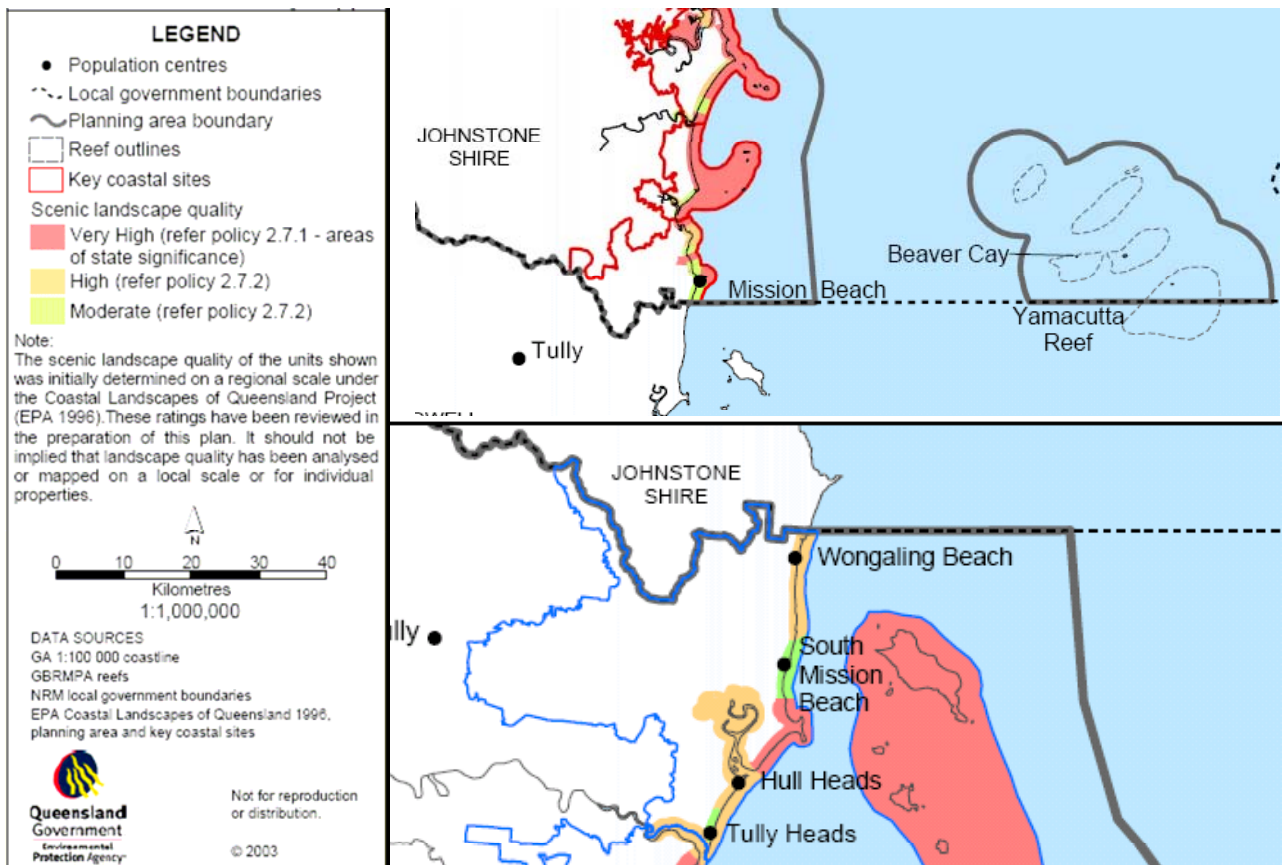
**Wongaling Beach to South Mission Beach (including Tam O’Shanter Point)**

- The scenic coastal landscape values of the prominent coastal headland at Tam O’Shanter Point;
- Very high landscape values and high natural integrity when viewed from the sea;
- The headland and Kennedy Bay which are areas of state significance (scenic coastal landscapes); (Queensland Government, 2003a, p.100-101)

**Family Islands**

- Extensive areas of very high scenic coastal landscapes on the islands
  - Indigenous traditional owners ongoing association with the islands
- (Queensland Government, 2003a, p.105)

As shown on the maps in Figure 9, the entire coastal zone along the Mission Beach region is designated as very high, high or moderate quality in terms of scenic landscapes. The Tam O’Shanter Point area is designated as a very high quality scenic landscape.



**Figure 9: Map of Scenic Coastal Landscapes – Johnston Shire & Cardwell Shire areas of Mission Beach (adapted from Queensland Government, 2003a,b)**

## 2.5 The Great Barrier Reef & Islands



**Figure 10: Panoramic View of Mission Beach Coastline (Source: Tourism Queensland)**

Mission Beach is situated in close proximity to the Great Barrier Reef and various islands including the Barnard and Family Island groups (as depicted in Figure 10). The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (GBRMP) is listed as a World Heritage Area for its outstanding natural (and cultural) heritage values, briefly noted below:

- *The Great Barrier Reef is by far the largest single collection of coral reefs in the world.*
- *Biologically the Great Barrier Reef supports the most diverse ecosystem known to man and its enormous diversity is thought to reflect the maturity of an ecosystem, which has evolved over millions of years on the northeast Continental Shelf of Australia.*
- *The Great Barrier Reef provides some of the most spectacular scenery on earth and is of exceptional natural beauty.*
- *The Great Barrier Reef contains many outstanding examples of important and significant natural habitats for in situ conservation of species of conservation significance, particularly resulting from the latitudinal and cross-shelf completeness of the region. (Australian Government, 2007)*

One of the coastal locations within the GBRMP located in the Mission Beach region that is highly valued is Boat Bay. This location is valued for its significant natural values, which include:

- *Fringing intertidal mangrove communities,*
- *Seagrass meadows throughout the bay,*
- *Areas of fringing reef that support several hard and soft coral species and macro-algae, and*
- *Rare and threatened species using the bay which include the beach stone-curlew, dugong, turtles, and Irrawaddy and Indo Pacific humpback dolphins (EPA, 2003 as cited in GBRMPA, 2005)*

Mission Beach is also in close proximity to several islands – Dunk, Bedarra and Hinchinbrook. These islands feature in the coastal panorama visible from Mission Beach (see Figure 10) and are important aspects of the aesthetic value of Mission Beach. Dunk Island has become an iconic destination to tourists visiting the region, as well as drawing its popularity for its famous artists colony.

The islands off Mission Beach are part of the Family Islands National Park. They are protected for their natural and cultural values, which include a variety of topographical and highly scenic landscapes, mosaics of rainforest settings, unique birds and animals, and the islands' indigenous and non-indigenous history. The surrounding coral reefs, sea life, seagrass beds, sea turtles and dugongs are key features of these islands. The Ulysses butterfly (see Section 2.3) that can be found on the islands is one of the most recognised insects, so much so that it has become Dunk Island's symbol on signage, brochures and other promotional material.

The EPA (2007) provide a concise description of the special features of the Family Islands:

*The lush, green, gently-rising hills of the Family Islands contrast greatly with the jagged and lofty profile of Hinchinbrook Island which dominates the southern horizon. Dunk Island, like the other Family Islands, is cloaked in a mosaic of dense rainforest in protected gullies and wet slopes, and eucalypt forest with an understorey of palms and looping lianas on drier more exposed ridges.*

*The Family Islands lie within the traditional sea country of the Bandjin and Djiru Aboriginal peoples, who for tens of thousands of years have collected, gathered and hunted the bountiful marine and island resources for food and materials. Today they retain a strong connection to these islands. Lt James Cook named Dunk Island in 1770 but it is best known from the writings of the "Beachcomber", E.J. Banfield, who lived on Dunk Island from 1897 until 1923, and wrote four books about the island's natural and cultural history.*

*The islands support many species of birds, insects, reptiles and mammals. Over time, the brilliant blue Ulysses butterfly has become a symbol for Dunk Island. The fringing reefs surrounding each of the islands are home to a diversity of reef life. Extensive seagrass beds lie between the islands and are important feeding grounds for sea turtles and dugong.*

## 2.6 Urban & Agricultural Attributes

### *Urban Landscape*

The urban landscape of the region consists of small, low-key shopping and tourist precincts, small-medium hotels/resorts/restaurants, and entertainment venues, mainly situated in the Mission Beach, Wongaling and South Mission Beach coastal villages. There are no large, multi-national commercial establishments such as department stores (i.e. Myers/Target/Kmart) or fast food outlets (i.e. McDonalds/Pizza Hut) in the villages. A great deal of the architecture and landscape design in these localities is 'tropical', using palm trees, rainforest areas, and low-rise buildings (see example in Figure 11). The combination of these urban landscape attributes creates the overall image of Mission Beach – being a quiet, relaxing and tropical, coastal village landscape.



**Figure 11: Mission Beach Shopping Precinct (Source: Fay Falco-Mammone)**

Recreational activities too, are defined by the tropical landscape and relaxed lifestyle of Mission Beach. Activities are largely nature-based (e.g. rainforest/beach walks, fishing, birdwatching, cycling), beach-related activities or shopping/dining, and marine-based activities (e.g. sailing/boating, fishing, diving/snorkelling) on the ocean and nearby islands. There is a distinct lack of crowds and an atmosphere of relaxation in the region. Mission Beach is situated at some distance from the Bruce Highway and has no rail access either, so low volumes of traffic on the roads also contribute to a slower pace and a quiet atmosphere.

### ***Agricultural Landscape***

The climate, geology and other natural resources of the areas surrounding Mission Beach have enabled the development of a significant agricultural landscape. Since the late 1800's, plantations of sugar cane, bananas, and tropical fruits were established in the region and have maintained a significant image in this landscape. This agricultural landscape provides a scenic amenity in the Mission Beach hinterland region, for residents and visitors travelling through the region.

The crops produced by the farming community have an additional value in attracting visitors to the region. In particular, visitors may be enticed by sampling the locally grown tropical fruits or bush tucker, locally produced wines, or learning about the region's agricultural history, as these attributes have become a part of the tropical lifestyle in Mission Beach.

However the agricultural landscape is secondary to the natural landscape. The relative isolation of Mission Beach from major road and rail transport routes means that agricultural development has been selective. Agriculture has focused on relatively flat and fertile lands, leaving the foreshores, wetlands, foothills and mountains forested. Additionally, the prime soils and tropical climate have meant that forests have reclaimed abandoned farms over time.

## 3.0 Valuing Aesthetic/Lifestyle Significance

### 3.1 Introduction

As discussed in Section 1, aesthetic values create a certain ‘way of life’ by provoking a human response, which is only possible because particular attributes are evident in the location. Having discussed these attributes, the next section presents the aesthetic/lifestyle values of the Mission Beach region from various human perspectives.

### 3.2 Urban Planning & Development

Conservation of the natural attributes in the Mission Beach region has, in many cases, been a pivotal mechanism in the development of the region over time. Evidence of the value placed on the natural attributes of the Mission Beach region is revealed in some urban planning and development guidelines and in residential property values. The region is represented by two local government authorities – Johnstone Shire Council and Cardwell Shire Council. Both councils have adopted planning schemes that show strong consideration for the visual amenity and natural significance of the Mission Beach region. This is exemplified in each of their vision statements for the region as quoted below:

*Mission Beach village will develop as a unique residential location and ecotourism destination which capitalises on the outstanding natural attributes that surround it. The village will develop a unique urban design identity that is environmentally responsive, maintaining and enhancing the natural character of the area. The scale of development will be consistent with maintaining a relaxed, intimate village setting and sense of local community. The scenic presentation of the area will maintain the effect of an undeveloped, natural coastline, when viewed from the water’s edge or from off shore. (Johnstone Shire Council Planning Scheme, 2005)*

*Mission beach provides for a growing residential population and tourism development which is low scale in character, whilst protecting the area’s outstanding natural values and rare and threatened species, notable the southern cassowary. (Cardwell Shire Council Planning Scheme, 2007)*

Both of these statements envision the preservation of the village-style landscape, that is, by maintaining low-levels of development in the region. The natural attributes are also key characteristics to be preserved and protected in the Mission Beach region. In particular, they



are significant aspects of the visual amenity of the region. The maps in Figure 13 (page 30) indicate the zones designated by the Councils as having high scenic amenity. The zones correspond with the Wet Tropics World Heritage rainforest areas (see Figure 4), the coastal zones (see Figure 9) and significant tourist routes (discussed in subsequent sections).

The importance of these natural attributes to the community in Johnstone Shire is further illustrated by the development of the Johnstone Shire's Landholder's Handbook. This is a broad guide to help community members in maintaining the natural and cultural values of the shire. The Handbook describes the Shire in terms of its tropical climate, river systems, World Heritage, rainforests, freshwater swamps, mangrove communities, open and coastal forests, the traditional owners, wildlife, agriculture, and recent settlement (Johnstone Shire Council, 2004). The Landholder's Handbook reinforces the Shire's commitment to preserving the attributes of the region that are highly valued.

Evidence of such efforts from the community to preserve these natural values is reflected in many ways. A selection of examples are as follows.



Cassawong Cottages, is an award-winning eco-resort at Mission Beach that strives to integrate tourist accommodation with the natural environment. In an incident that was causing their guests great discomfort, the resort owners went to the expense of hosing fruits from a tree overhanging one of their cottages, rather than removing the tree altogether (see Figure 12). The tree's fruits were a valuable food source for the native fauna and as such also valued by the accommodation's owners and guests.

**Figure 12: Cassawong Cottages “eco-solution” (Source: Julie Carmody)**



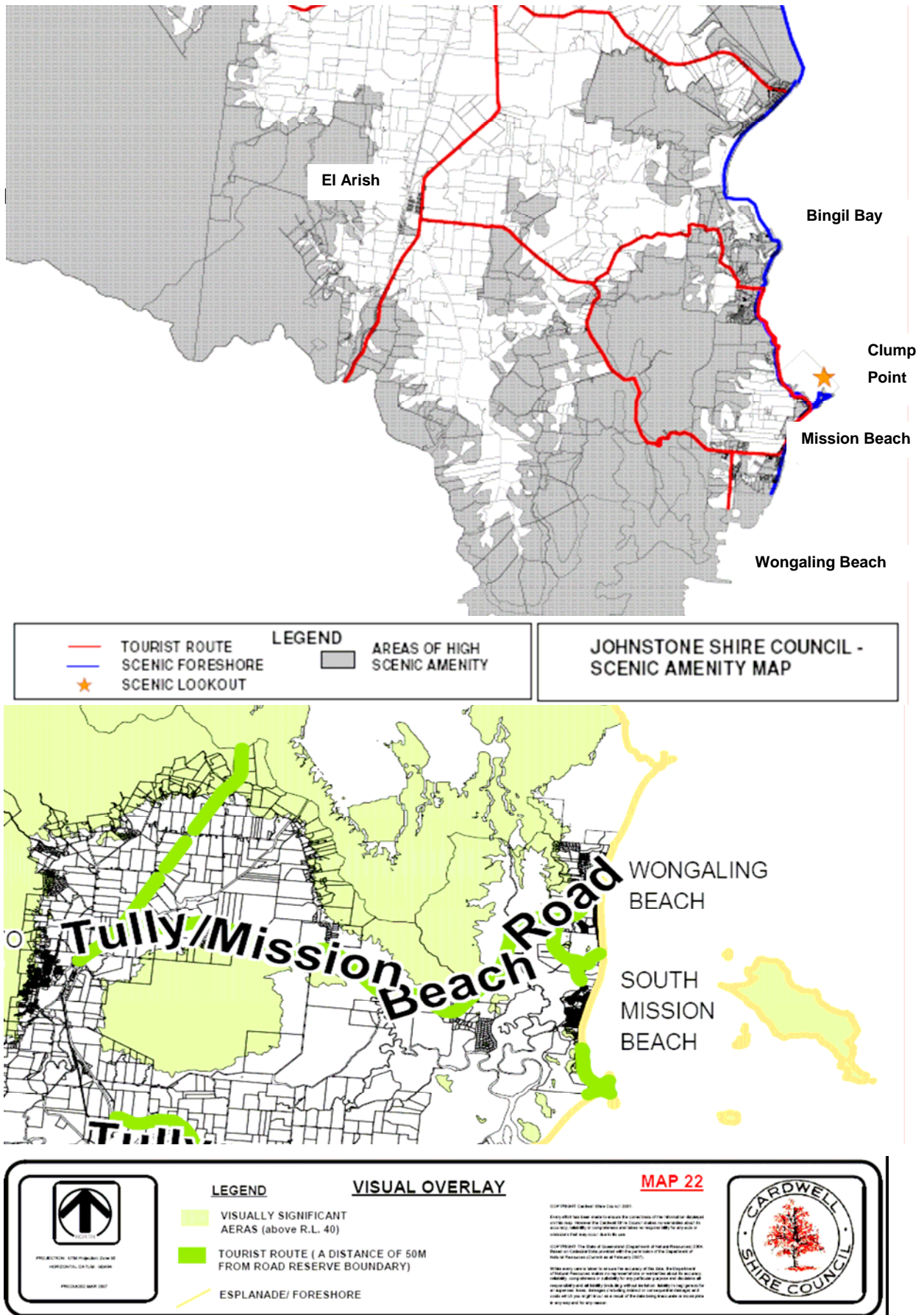


Figure 13: Johnstone & Cardwell Shire Councils Visually Significant Areas (adapted for Mission Beach region only)

The region's natural attributes also strongly feature in real estate brochures advertising of properties in the Mission Beach region. Specifically, cassowary, Ulysses butterflies, tropical landscapes, coastal and island views and World Heritage are emphasised as special characteristics of these properties. Some examples of these are as follows, and were taken from a search of Mission Beach real estate on the website – <http://www.realestate.com.au>:

*“Merry Burn creek bubbles through this beautiful property, the creek is spring fed from Mount Mackay which is situated behind the homestead. The bushland behind the house is home to a male **Cassowary**, who successfully raised a couple of chicks last season. The **Ulysses Butterfly** are prolific throughout the gardens of this special place. The **native vegetation** along the creek houses the vines that they feed upon. This property is only 10 minutes to Tully and 15 minutes to beautiful Mission Beach...”* realestate.com.au Property No. 104192758

*“Take yourself to the top of the world in a paradise beyond belief. The serenity here has to be experienced to be believed. Over an acre of **tropical gardens and rainforest** surround you here...only the visiting wildlife including the rare and endangered **Cassowary**... 240 degree views to the **Coral Sea**...”* realestate.com.au Property No. 104006361

*“...with a rain-forested wilderness corridor at your boundary and lovely views of the **Coral Sea** from the upper living deck...”* realestate.com.au Property No. 10605

*“Once on the golden sands of Wongaling Beach you will feast on beautiful views of **Dunk Island** just off shore and **Hinchinbrook Island** off to the south... the property is full of wonderful extras and is superbly located not only on the beachfront, but still in walking distance to local shops and restaurants...”* realestate.com.au Property No. 10573

*“El Arish...home set on 8 acres in the middle of the rainforest adjoins **World Heritage** with a spring fed all year round creek below the elevated property...”* realestate.com.au Property No. 10600

*“Nearly 9 hectares bordering on **World Heritage** listed National rainforest, where you can collect sparkling clean water from a spring fed water hole, originating from the mountain above. Stunning views towards the valley below*

*can be had from this serene hillside property which is bordered at the rear by the Walter Hill Range...*

*realestate.com.au Property No. 104057758*

The prominence of these natural features signifies the value of such attributes both to those who own property in the region and to those marketing these properties to potential buyers. Similar attributes are described for new developments in the region. For example, the Oasis development brochure (see Figure 14) describes the location using terms such as “tropical surroundings”, “coexisting with the local ecosystem”, “unsoiled beaches”, in a “township offers seaside restaurants, cafes, shops, and markets”, to name but a few. Essentially, the developers are focusing on the natural values of the location, as well as the relaxed tropical lifestyle of Mission Beach to entice investors.

The Oasis is but one example of the attention paid to these special characteristics of the region. Other evidence indicates that Mission Beach’s natural attributes and under-developed landscape are key factors driving an increase in real estate and resort development. Recently, several newspapers have reported on this movement in Mission Beach, with headlines such as:

*“Beach Resorts go for Record Prices”*

*(Australian Financial Review, July 2007)*

*“Developers Eye Mission Beach”*

*(Australian Financial Review, 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 2007)*

*“Property Price on Move in Mission Beach”*

*(Cairns Post, 25<sup>th</sup> July, 2007)*

*“No Sleepy Time Up North”*

*(Australian Financial Review, 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2007)*

*“Mission No Longer Impossible”*

*(Australian Financial Review, 11 November 2006)*





# PARADISE REDISCOVERED

## A TRULY UNIQUE INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY

What better place could there be to discover the stunning tropical surroundings of North Queensland, than from your own dream living environment.

There's plenty of room for even the grandest of visions. Allotments start from 600 sqm and are designed to co-exist with the local ecosystem, while retaining the natural beauty of the World Heritage wet tropics area and surrounding rainforest.

This unique, World Heritage listed area, located just a short drive from Cairns, is the closest access point in North Queensland to the outer Great Barrier Reef.

You can relax on the unspoiled beaches and take in unobstructed views of both Dunk and Bedarra Islands, stroll through breathtaking rainforests or just enjoy the beautiful scenery. Whatever your plans, Oasis at Mission Beach accommodates them all!

A wander through the township offers seaside restaurants, cafes, shops and markets. And then there's the sailing, scuba diving, fishing and hundreds of other ways to explore, enjoy, unwind or simply relax in the natural surroundings.

Oasis at Mission Beach is the ideal place to live a tropical lifestyle.



Mission Beach, Queensland

LAND NOW SELLING

[www.oasismissionbeach.com.au](http://www.oasismissionbeach.com.au)

Figure 14: Oasis Development Brochure, Mission Beach

Ironically, the factors contributing to the significant growth and interest shown by property developers and real-estate buyers in Mission Beach are primarily the natural attributes of the region. These include:

1. the distinct lack of intensely built-up areas or commercial activity,
2. the abundance of natural attributes(see Section 2.0 for specific attributes), and
3. the surrounding World Heritage Areas (including National Parks).

Consequently, there is a noticeable presence of organisations, activities, and individuals in the Mission Beach community who actively support the preservation of these natural attributes.

### **3.3 Community Values & Attitudes**

#### ***Artists & the Environment in the Community***

The Mission Beach community is a small, unique blend of people from various different backgrounds and nationalities. Two extraordinary features of the community that are representative of the lifestyle values of the region are the:

1. prevalence of nature-inspired artists,
2. concentration of conservation-based organisations, and groups/individuals who have an environmentally conscious attitude.

Mission Beach has a number of art galleries, local artists, writers and even its own artist's colony on Dunk Island. Historically, the region has attracted a host of artists including:

- John Busst – one of the original artists to make his home in the region, and an advocate for preserving the Great Barrier Reef,
- Bruce Arthur – established the Artist's Colony,
- Helen Wiltshire – a renowned artist who's paintings reflect the unique natural features of the Mission Beach region, and has her own gallery in Mission Beach
- E.J. Banfield, famous author, also known as "the Beachcomber", lived on Dunk Island from 1897 until 1923, and wrote four books about the island's natural and cultural history, including the famous novel – "Confessions of a Beachcomber".
- 

For the majority of these people, the attraction of Mission Beach was the outstanding natural features such as the tropical landscapes, magnificent scenery, and peaceful lifestyle that were conducive to their creative endeavours. This inspiration is evident in much of the artwork, writing, jewellery, pottery and photography produced by local artists. The Ulysses Link walking trail at North Mission Beach is an outstanding example of relationship between art, community and natural environment. The walking track is decorated with Indigenous and local history, displayed through mosaics, carvings and sculptures.

The natural attributes are also the focus of conservation-based organisations in Mission Beach. One of the most prominent is the Community for Coastal and Cassowary Conservation (C4). The C4 organisation aims to implement the Cassowary Management Plan, supports and promotes World Heritage values, and aids in the conservation of environmentally significant areas in the region. It is largely a volunteer-based organisation, which place high levels of effort into rescue and rehabilitation of local wildlife, and in reforestation of the region's Cassowary habitats.

### ***Community Values of the Wet Tropics***

Community perspectives on the significance of natural landscapes are important in establishing lifestyle values as well as preserving the natural attributes of the region. The Mission Beach and surrounding area residents' attitudes towards natural values were recently evaluated in the WTMA Community Resident Survey in 2007 conducted by James Cook University under the Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility Project 4.9.2.

The results of this study revealed that these residents considered the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area to be important (N=139; Mean = 5.4 on a scale where 1=not important and 6=very important). Additionally, residents were also asked how important they considered the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area to be, with the results indicating that they valued it as considerably important (Mean=5.42 on a scale where 1=not important and 6=very important).

Within the WTWHA area, the locations that residents indicated were their favourite places were:

- Mission Beach (17.6%)
- Tully Falls (16.2%)
- Lacey Creek (12.2%)
- Hinchinbrook Island (9.5%).

When asked why they stated these places as their favourite, more than half said 'beauty' (55.7%), a further 15.7% said 'pristine/untouched' (15.7%) and 11.4% said 'for walking'. The main reasons for visiting the Wet Tropics rainforests that residents stated were:

- Holiday/getaway/recreation (24.3%),
- Walking (18.0%)
- Tourism (16.2%)
- Enjoy with friends/family (10.8%)
- Own property (10.8%).

Overall, these statistics indicate there is a strong community association with the Wet Tropics rainforest of the Mission Beach region – particularly for recreation, and rest and relaxation.



### 3.4 Traditional Owners' Values

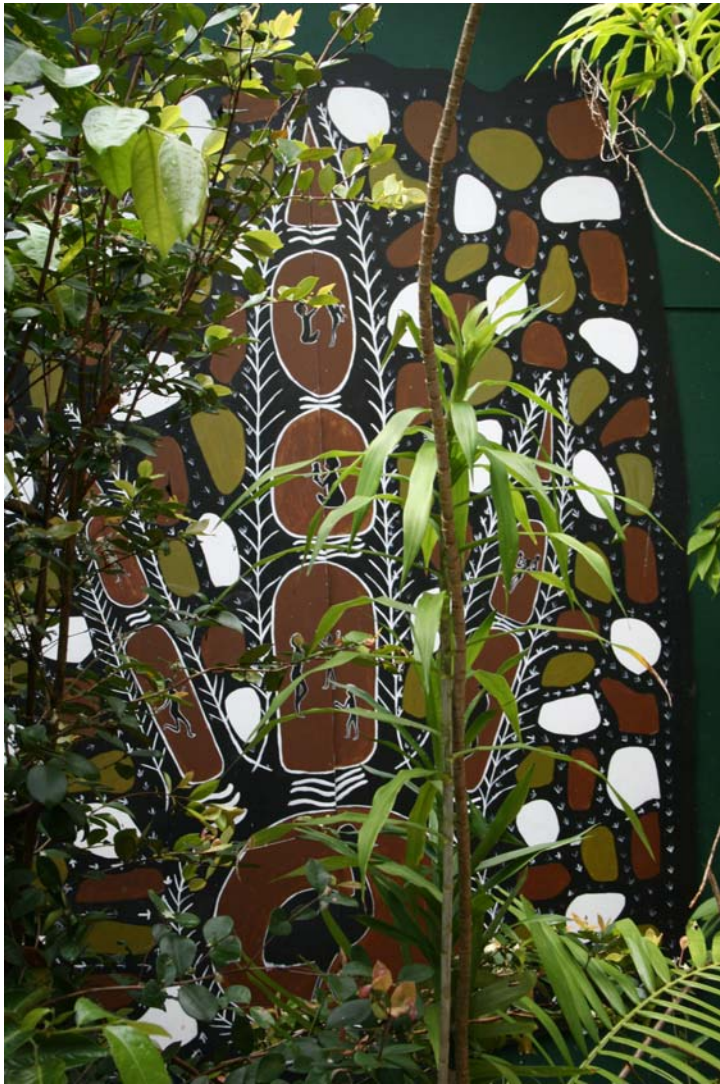
The Mission Beach region contains significant landscapes for the traditional owners of this land – the Djiru people. The Indigenous people have long-established relationships with the landscape and the natural resources in this region. In respect of this relationship, the Wet Tropics Conservation Strategy lists a wide variety of Aboriginal cultural heritage values for the region, including:

- “Spiritual: creation stories, sacred sites, burial grounds, bora grounds, ceremony, and responsibility for country totems;*
  - Ecological: bush tucker (animals and plants), bush medicine, knowledge of ecological relationships, fire management, seasonal calendar;*
  - Social: language, living areas and camps, walking tracks, kinship systems, clans, cultural identity, and traditional law;*
  - Economic: hunting and gathering, tools, food preparation, shelter building, harvesting resources, art and craft.”*
- (Wet Tropics Management Authority, 2004)*

There is strong evidence of these values present in both the land and marine characteristics of the Mission Beach region. For example, the traditional owners place high levels of importance on the Cassowary. As shown in Figure 15, the Cassowary is depicted in Aboriginal art, is spiritually significant, is used for ceremonial decorations, and for various other reasons. Cassowary native foods such as Davidson Plums, Burdekin Plums and Blue Quandongs are also highly valued foods for the region's Aboriginal people too.

Conversely, the marine and coastal area connections also exist. For example, the Clump Point (Tam O'Shanter National Park) area of Mission Beach is a significant location for the Djiru tribal group. They have a strong cultural connection relating to hunting and fishing, seagrass meadows, ceremonial grounds and the cultural landscape (GBRMPA, 2005; EPA, 2007). The Djiru also obtained food from the many creeks and rivers in the region, using various methods incorporating locally sourced materials. Boat Bay also contains several archaeological sites respective of the local Aboriginal tribal history.





*“Cassowary are culturally very significant. Many Rainforest Aboriginal people have customs, stories, songs and dances about the cassowary. Cassowaries are prized food, and their feathers, claws and bone are used for ornaments and hunting. Cassowary images are found on rock art in the Wet Tropics. Artists continue to paint pictures of the birds in artwork and for artefacts to sell to tourists. Many of the trees cassowaries “plant” are food that Rainforest Aboriginal people enjoy eating, such as Burdekin Plums, Davidson Plums and Blue Quandong.” (Wet Tropics Management Authority, 2006)*

**Figure 15: (Left) Cassowary Aboriginal Art (Source: Julie Carmody) (Right) Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Significance of Cassowary**

### 3.5 Tourism Values in Mission Beach

***“Overwhelmingly, the reason visitors state for coming to Mission Beach is the beauty of our natural environment, the beach, the rainforest, the opportunity to glimpse a cassowary and enjoy our laid back lifestyle.”  
(Hayes, 2007)***

**Figure 16: Reasons for Visiting Missing Beach**

#### **Tourism Values in a Wet Tropics Region**

Tourism is an important industry in the Mission Beach Region, and since a substantial portion of the region is in Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, it is recognised in WT management plans, including those related to nature-based tourism. For example, the Wet Tropics Nature-Based Tourism Strategy (WTMA, 2000) nominated the Mission Beach region as the “Cassowary Coast Precinct”, noted for its natural attributes and numerous values to tourism. In particular, the Strategy makes the following statements regarding these values:

***“Natural Attributes:***

- *Remnant coastal rainforests supporting numbers of cassowaries,*
- *wetlands with diverse Wet Tropics coastal habitats,*
- *mangrove communities,*
- *the coincidence of the Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Areas, and*
- *expansive stretches of beach and coastal scenery.*

***Special Tourism Values and Opportunities:***

- *Recognition of coastal lowlands and Mission Beach as a ‘sanctuary’ area for the cassowary,*
- *Mission Beach and Cardwell Interpretation Centres,*
- *Tully Gorge provides popular adventure and small group river based recreation opportunities,*
- *Mission Beach area as a focus for a Wet Tropics coastal tourism destination south of Cairns, and*
- *potential opportunities for Tully Gorge to be a major regional walking track ‘head’ and*
- *bushwalking opportunities in spectacular settings.” (pp. 37-38)*

## Tourism and the Mission Beach Landscape



Tourism has significantly contributed to, as well as changed, the urban landscape in the Mission Beach region (FNQRPAC, 2000). Tourism development in region has largely consisted of small to medium tourist resorts, restaurants and bars (see Figure 17 (a)), some low-key attractions and small shopping villages in the area.



The visual qualities of the tourism landscape tend to express the 'tropical-ness' and laid-back atmosphere of the location. Tropical gardens and rainforest settings (including National Parks) are key characteristics of the tourism landscape. Added to this, are the outdoor dining experiences, rainforest and reef-based activities, and the many coastal and rainforest walks (e.g. Lacey Creek Walk, see Figure 17 (b)).



The Mission Beach Visitor Centre (see Figure 17 (c)) is both a significant attraction and an important location in the Mission Beach region. The Centre hosts up to 29,000 annually (Hayes, 2007), and provides vital information to tourists who visit Mission Beach. It is also a key visitor attraction, particularly since the centre shares the grounds with the Community for Coastal & Cassowary Conservation (C4).



C4 showcases the rainforest and cassowaries, and houses a rainforest plant nursery, which is also fundamental in maintaining the region's natural landscape and educating residents and visitor on the significance of cassowaries.

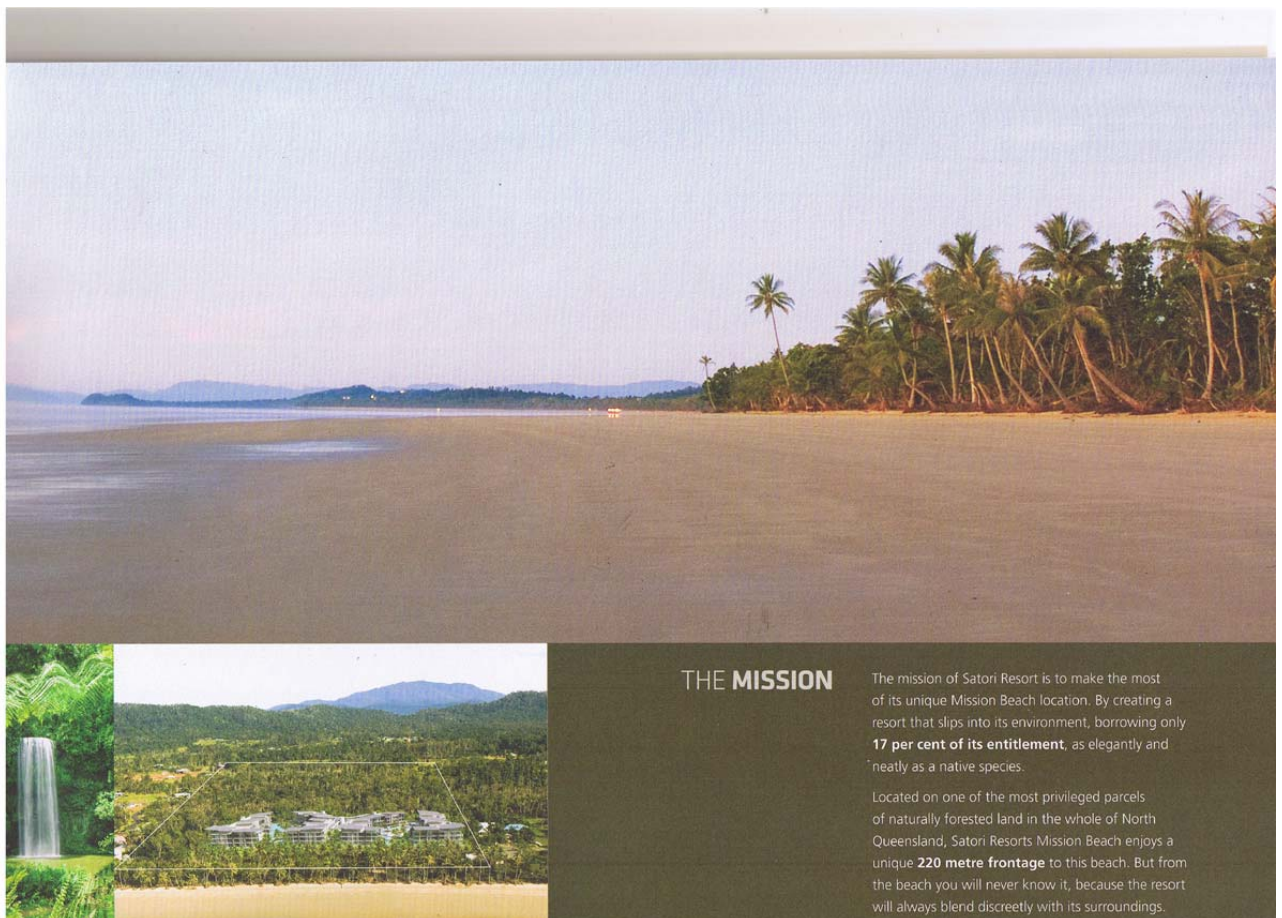
**Figure 17: (a) Restaurant; (b) Lacey Creek Walk; (c) Mission Beach Visitor Centre; (d) Environment Centre**



## Tourism Marketing & Mission Beach

Mission Beach features strongly at all levels of tourism marketing, be it local, regional, state-based or nationally. The aesthetic and lifestyle values described in previous sections are key attributes used to market the destination to both domestic and international visitors.

For example, Tourism Australia (2007) markets Mission Beach to the world describing the location using all of the natural and cultural features that exist in the region. The overall image delivered to the potential visitors in the description (see Figure 19 on following page) resembles a tropical paradise where the beaches and tropical rainforest coastal settings are central to the image. The urban landscapes are described as 'villages' that are carefully placed within the natural landscape. An example of such an image is depicted in Mission Beach's Satori Resorts brochure in Figure 18. The brochure particularly describes the location of the infrastructure as being discretely placed within the natural environment so as to not infringe upon the aesthetics of the location.



**Figure 18: Satori Resort, Mission Beach Brochure**

*Mission Beach is a relaxed, yet vibrant beachfront town with over 14 kilometres of magnificent golden sandy beaches. Here two World Heritage areas, The Great Barrier Reef and Wet Tropics Rainforest, come together to form a tropical paradise. In many places, the rainforest literally fringes stretches of pristine golden beach, giving the destination reputation as an ideal natural holiday choice.*

*Less than 5 kilometres offshore, Dunk Island and Bedarra Island make up an aquatic playground that is renowned along the east coast of Queensland. The Great Barrier Reef is only 38 kilometres away making Mission Beach the closest mainland access to the Reef, just an hour or so by boat. This means more time experiencing the wonders of Queensland's Great Barrier Reef when you stay at Mission Beach. There are four villages that are collectively known as Mission Beach:*

*-South Mission Beach-Wongaling Beach-North Mission Beach-Bingil Bay*

*Fourteen kilometres of palm-fringed beach connect these four small townships, from Kennedy Bay in the south, to Garners Beach in the north, a favourite spot for naturalists. The Edmund Kennedy walking track at the southern end of the beach is part beach, mangrove and rainforest. Several creeks empty their waters at Mission Beach and locals can often be found fishing for barramundi and mangrove jacks. Good fishing is also to be had at Clump Point jetty and the rock wall at Clump Point boat ramp. And for absolute seclusion, try Brooks Beach or Garners Beach at the northern end. It's quite likely that you'll catch a glimpse of the endangered Southern Cassowary in the rainforest around Mission Beach.*

*At Mission Beach, you will find a tranquil and very friendly tropical holiday township ideally suited to those who desire a true break from everyday life.*

*Tourism Australia & Tourism Queensland (2007)*

Figure 19: Tourism Australia/Queensland's Description of Mission Beach

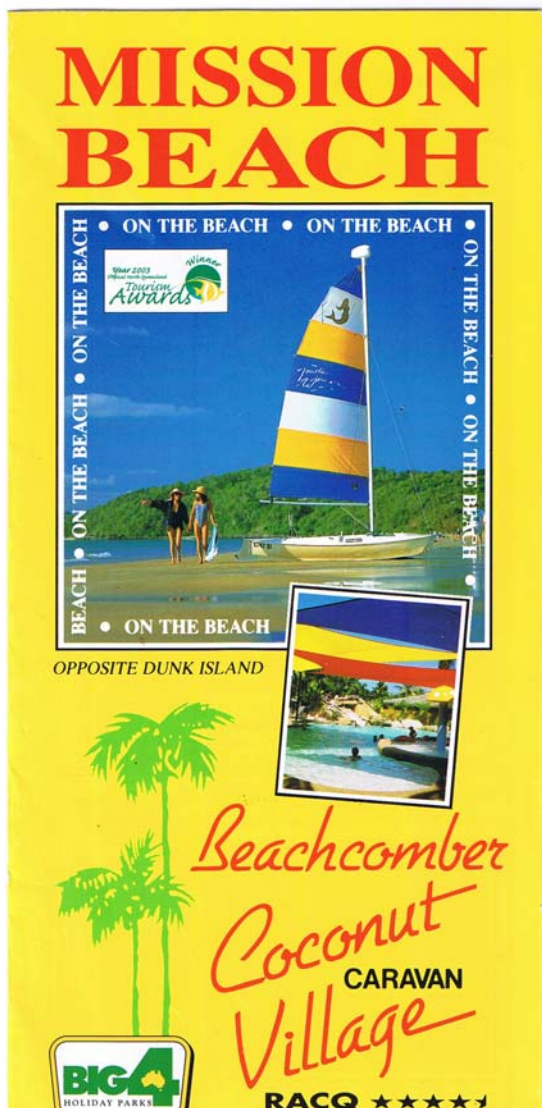


Figure 20: Mission Beach Tourism Business Brochures

The various natural and cultural attributes of Mission Beach are also strongly featured in tourism brochures found in the Mission Beach region. For example, the brochures in Figure 20 include picturesque coastal and tropical landscapes, featuring palm trees, beaches, marine-based and adventure activities. These characteristics are fundamental in showcasing Mission Beach to visitors.

The Mission Beach region is featured in The Great Tropical Drive and The Great Green Way themed drive routes of Queensland. This significant tourist drive takes visitors on a journey from Townsville to Cairns. Specifically, the Mission Beach region is incorporated into these and the scenic, natural and cultural values of the region are the key factors in attracting visitors to venture onto the drive loop between Tully and Mission Beach. It is described as follows:

*“Tully to Mission Beach – This trail takes you through some of the truly scenic wonders of the tropical north – lush rainforests, golden beaches, and strange flightless birds – the elusive cassowary. You will gain a good insight into the traditions and culture of the local Indigenous people, and enjoy the unlimited opportunities to test your skills with more adventurous activities”*

*(Tourism Tropical North Queensland and Townsville Enterprise Ltd., 2006)*



The Mission Beach section of the Great Tropical Drive scenic route is listed as one of the scenic corridors for its significant environmental and visual values (FNQRPAC, 2000).

### What do the tourists say?

**Cherie From: Austria 4/05/2006 8:36:31 AM**

*Visiting up North a 'must do' is definitely Mission Beach. The place is so pretty and the beaches have the best views of the island too. Spent some time up there in 2002 and can't wait to get back.*

**Mick From: Australia 29/04/2006 10:50:25 AM**

*I reckon that one of the best places in the area is Mission Beach -far better than Cairns and Townsville. And the people at Mission Beach have done a great job of clearing up the area - you would hardly know that a cyclone passed through the place. Great restaurants, wonderful B and Bs - a great place to unwind and relax.*

**Robyn From: Australia 28/04/2006 2:41:02 PM**

*Remember to stop in at Mission Beach, the place is awesome.*

(Great Tropical Drive, 2007)

**Figure 21: Tourist Blogs on the Great Tropical Drive Website**

The tourists' comments in Figure 21 are merely an indication of the significance of Mission Beach as a valuable tourist destination in Tropical North Queensland. More specifically, there have been a number of recent studies of visitors' perceptions of the TNQ region, which included Mission Beach, and support the natural and cultural values of the region.

In 2006, Tourism Queensland conducted a survey with 244 visitors in the Mission Beach region. The results of this study revealed that the most common motivations for tourists visiting Mission Beach were to relax and rejuvenate (86%), enjoy the peace and quiet of an uncrowded destination (82%), experience nature (72%), spend time with my partner (67%), and to discover/learn something new (63%) (Tourism Queensland, 2006). These visitors also stated

they had experienced 'relaxing on the beach ' (85%), the rainforest (75%), walking trails (66%), observe a cassowary (53%), and the reef (46%) and Dunk Island (38%) (Tourism Queensland, 2006).

Another study conducted in 2006 by James Cook University's Tourism Program and the Tropical Landscape Joint Venture, offers further confirmation of the significant values held by tourists visiting the Mission Beach-Tully-Atherton Tablelands region. This particular study examined visitors' perceptions of the region following the impacts of severe Tropical Cyclone Larry on the broad region. In this report, the results indicated that when visitors were asked what were the three main features of the region that had attracted them to visit, despite the potential effects of TC Larry, they listed mainly the natural attributes such as the climate, rainforests, the Great Barrier Reef and beaches (see Table 1) (Falco-Mammone, Coghlan, & Prideaux, 2006). These are similar features as indicated in the Tourism Queensland visitor study, and a reiteration of the natural values discussed in previous sections.

**Table 1: Features that Attracted Visitors to the Region**

| Attractions                             | Percentage<br>(n = 220) |
|---|-------------------------|
| Climate/weather/tropics                 | 20.9                    |
| Rainforests/vegetation/plants           | 17.4                    |
| GBR                                     | 12.4                    |
| Beaches                                 | 8.3                     |
| Friendships/relatives                   | 4.3                     |
| Wildlife/birds/animals                  | 4.3                     |
| Seeing the country/sights/new places    | 2.9                     |
| Natural surroundings/environment/nature | 2.5                     |
| Scenery                                 | 2.3                     |
| Relaxation/relaxed atmosphere           | 1.9                     |

## 4.0 Areas of Comparative Significance

The systematic comparative evaluation of the Mission Beach region with other locations in Australia and the world requires some values and/or attributes with which to compare. The previous sections have served this purpose. The natural significance, aesthetic/lifestyle values of the region have been discussed in broad terms including:

- Wet Tropics World Heritage Area
- Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area
- Urban and Agricultural attributes
- Community and Traditional Owner values
- Tourism values

As such, these can be considered as variables to be used for comparing the Mission Beach region to other locations.

### 4.1 Australian Comparisons

Within Australia, there are several locations that can be readily identified as being analogous to Mission Beach. These locations are described in the following section.

#### ***The Daintree Region***

The Daintree is one location is directly comparable to Mission Beach, having many of the natural attributes and similar variables with which to compare. The Daintree is situated approximately the same distance from Cairns as Mission Beach, except it is to the north. The region has two World Heritage Areas (rainforest and reef) and consists of a relatively under-developed group of villages scattered throughout the rainforested and agricultural landscapes (i.e. Daintree, Cape Tribulation, and Cow Bay). Similar to Mission Beach, the Daintree is also noted for its significant scenic coastal landscapes, vast areas of high natural integrity associated with high biodiversity and as a habitat for rare and threatened flora and fauna (WTMA, 2003).

The Daintree's landscape is described as being "one of striking diversity and is known throughout the world for its magnificent scenery including mountain ranges, streams and waterfalls, deep gorges, white sandy beaches and dense rainforests...in some areas rainforested mountains sweep down to the coastline to meet the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area" (WTMA, 2004, p. 27). Additionally, all of these significant features are enticing to tourists from Australia and around the world, so much so, that the Daintree area has become an iconic tourist destination. Many tours operate out of Cairns taking visitors to different locations in the Daintree region.

However, the Daintree has been subject to decades of debating over the level of access, infrastructure and development that should be allowed in the region, with some residents and developers advocating increased or better access and further urban-style development. Nonetheless, according to WTMA, “the Daintree Futures Study has recommended that the scenic beauty and natural values of the Daintree be protected and that future development in the area be restricted accordingly” (WTMS, 2004, p.27).

### **Noosa & Port Douglas**

Mission Beach is comparable to two other key tourism-based locations in Queensland. These are Noosa Heads (on the Sunshine Coast in South East Queensland) and Port Douglas (in Tropical North Queensland). The comparability lies with respect to the location’s real estate development, tourism infrastructure and tourism values.

Real estate development brochures and media tend to compare Mission Beach with other locations. Specific claims and references are made to Mission Beach in comparison to Noosa and Port Douglas in some examples, including:

- The term “Noosa Nouveau”, which is coined in the Satori Resort brochure, indicating that the resort is a ‘new and different’ version of Noosa. The brochure specifically states:

*The new Noosa is a promise many North Queensland locations have pretended to make and somehow never quite kept. Mission beach is the one place that will make the claim and fulfil the promise...the same ingredients that distinguished Noosa in the seventies are all prominent in Mission Beach today... (Satori Resorts, 2007)*

- Property investors have been reported as ‘eyeing’ Mission Beach with the same investment passion as was given to Port Douglas in the past. One factor is seen as valuable to entrepreneurs, that is, exclusivity:

*Both projects (i.e. The Horizon and Castaways resorts) would see Mission Beach being marketed as a more exclusive, boutique alternative to Port Douglas. (Australian Financial Review, 2007a).*

*Real estate entrepreneurs complain Port Douglas is overdeveloped but Mission Beach, south of Cairns, remains exclusive (Australian Financial Review, 2007b).*

Ironically, it is the past decade's images of these locations and not the current images, which are being compared to the current Mission Beach. Many years ago, both Port Douglas and Noosa were considered to be 'sleepy coastal villages' with low levels of urban and tourism development. Port Douglas has continued to boom, following the opening of the Sheraton Mirage Resort in 1988. There are, however, extensive planning policies and strategies in place in the Douglas Shire to restrict certain development and ensure the maintenance of the natural/lifestyle values in the region. Similarly, development has prospered at Noosa Heads over time, which has also led to strict measures having been put in place to restrict development and maintain the natural/lifestyle values (e.g. no high-rise buildings, population capping, and National Park/conservation areas).

## **4.2 World-Wide Comparisons**

In attempting a systematic comparative evaluation of Mission Beach with other worldwide locations, it was considered to be an enormous task, requiring time and budget exceeding that of the current project. Consequently, the comparative evaluation was focused on only the outstanding values of Mission Beach – primarily the natural attributes and the World Heritage Area status arising from the surrounding Wet Tropics rainforests and the Great Barrier Reef.

A search of the World Heritage Area global list, using the World Heritage Criteria – (vii) *Superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty or aesthetic importance* - revealed a list of 100 properties worldwide that include (but not limited to) this criteria. All of these properties are listed in Table 2 (UNESCO, 2007). Many of the sites that include WHA criteria (vii) are similar to the Mission Beach region in terms of natural values, are situated on the coast, and have village-like development. Consequently, it cannot be said that Mission Beach has specific or unique qualities as a location that distinguishes it from other WHA listed locations in the world that have the (vii) criteria. However, this characteristic does not diminish the fact that Mission Beach is indeed a location with high natural values, particularly those representing World Heritage status. Furthermore, these natural values are integrated into the complex web of the Mission Beach community.



**Table 2: World Heritage Area Sites**

| Sites including, but not limited to WHA Criteria (vii)  |
|---|
| <p><b>Africa</b></p> <p>Côte d'Ivoire</p> <p>Taï National Park (1982)</p> <p>Democratic Republic of the Congo</p> <p>Virunga National Park (1979) #</p> <p>Garamba National Park (1980)</p> <p>Garamba National Park (1980)</p> <p>Salonga National Park (1984)</p> <p>Ethiopia</p> <p>Simien National Park (1978)</p> <p>Kenya</p> <p>Mount Kenya National Park/Natural Forest (1997)</p> <p>Madagascar</p> <p>Tsingy de Bemaraha Strict Nature Reserve (1990)</p> <p>Malawi</p> <p>Lake Malawi National Park (1984)</p> <p>Niger</p> <p>Air and Ténéré Natural Reserves (1991)</p> <p>Senegal</p> <p>Djoudj National Bird Sanctuary (1981)</p> <p>Djoudj National Bird Sanctuary (1981)</p> <p>Seychelles</p> <p>Aldabra Atoll (1982)</p> <p>Vallée de Mai Nature Reserve (1983)</p> <p>South Africa</p> <p>Greater St Lucia Wetland Park (1999)</p> <p>Uganda</p> <p>Rwenzori Mountains National Park (1994)</p> <p>Bwindi Impenetrable National Park (1994)</p> <p>United Republic of Tanzania</p> <p>Ngorongoro Conservation Area (1979) #</p> <p>Serengeti National Park (1981)</p> <p>Kilimanjaro National Park (1987)</p> <p>Zambia</p> <p>Mosi-oa-Tunya / Victoria Falls (1989) # *</p> <p>Zimbabwe</p> <p>Mana Pools National Park, Sapi and Chewore Safari Areas (1984)</p> <p>Mosi-oa-Tunya / Victoria Falls (1989) # *</p> |
| <p><b>Asia and the Pacific</b></p> <p>Australia</p> <p>Great Barrier Reef (1981)</p> <p>Lord Howe Island Group (1982)</p>   |

Wet Tropics of Queensland (1988)  
 Shark Bay, Western Australia (1991)  
 Fraser Island (1992)  
 Macquarie Island (1997)  
 Purnululu National Park (2003)  
 China  
 Huanglong Scenic and Historic Interest Area (1992)  
 Jiuzhaigou Valley Scenic and Historic Interest Area (1992)  
 Wulingyuan Scenic and Historic Interest Area (1992)  
 Three Parallel Rivers of Yunnan Protected Areas (2003)  
 South China Karst (2007)  
 India  
 Manas Wildlife Sanctuary (1985)  
 Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks (1988, 2005)  
 Indonesia  
 Komodo National Park (1991)  
 Ujung Kulon National Park (1991)  
 Tropical Rainforest Heritage of Sumatra (2004)  
 Japan  
 Yakushima (1993)  
 Malaysia  
 Gunung Mulu National Park (2000)  
 Nepal  
 Sagarmatha National Park (1979)  
 Royal Chitwan National Park (1984)  
 New Zealand  
 Te Wahipounamu – South West New Zealand (1990) 1  
 Philippines  
 Tubbataha Reef Marine Park (1993)  
 Puerto-Princesa Subterranean River National Park (1999)  
 Republic of Korea  
 Jeju Volcanic Island and Lava Tubes (2007)  
 Thailand  
 Thungyai-Huai Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuaries (1991)  
 Viet Nam  
 Ha Long Bay (1994, 2000)

#### **Europe and North America**

Belarus  
 Belovezhskaya Pushcha / Białowieża Forest (1979, 1992) \*  
 Bulgaria  
 Pirin National Park (1983)  
 Canada  
 Nahanni National Park (1978) #  
 Dinosaur Provincial Park (1979)  
 Kluane / Wrangell-St Elias / Glacier Bay / Tatshenshini-Alsek (1979, 1992, 1994) # \* 2

Wood Buffalo National Park (1983)  
 Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks (1984, 1990) # 3  
 Gros Morne National Park (1987)  
 Waterton Glacier International Peace Park (1995) \*  
 Croatia  
 Plitvice Lakes National Park (1979, 2000) #  
 Denmark  
 Ilulissat Icefjord (2004)  
 France  
 Gulf of Porto: Calanche of Piana, Gulf of Girolata, Scandola Reserve (1983) #  
 Montenegro  
 Durmitor National Park (1980, 2005)  
 Norway  
 West Norwegian Fjords – Geirangerfjord and Nærøyfjord (2005)  
 Poland  
 Belovezhskaya Pushcha / Białowieża Forest (1979, 1992) \*  
 Romania  
 Danube Delta (1991)  
 Russian Federation  
 Virgin Komi Forests (1995)  
 Lake Baikal (1996)  
 Volcanoes of Kamchatka (1996, 2001) 4  
 Slovenia  
 Škocjan Caves (1986) #  
 Spain  
 Doñana National Park (1984, 2005)  
 Garajonay National Park (1986)  
 Teide National Park (2007)  
 Switzerland  
 Jungfrau-Aletsch-Bietschhorn (2001, 2007)  
 United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland  
 Giant's Causeway and Causeway Coast (1986)  
 Henderson Island (1988)  
 Gough and Inaccessible Islands (1995, 2004) 5  
 United States of America  
 Yellowstone National Park (1978)  
 Grand Canyon National Park (1979)  
 Kluane / Wrangell-St Elias / Glacier Bay / Tatshenshini-Alsek (1979, 1992, 1994 Redwood National and State  
 Parks (1980)  
 Mammoth Cave National Park (1981)  
 Olympic National Park (1981)  
 Great Smoky Mountains National Park (1983)  
 Yosemite National Park (1984) #  
 Carlsbad Caverns National Park (1995)  
 Waterton Glacier International Peace Park (1995) \*

**Latin America and the Caribbean**

## Argentina

Los Glaciares (1981) #

Iguazu National Park (1984)

## Belize

Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System (1996)

## Brazil

Iguaçu National Park (1986)

Atlantic Forest South-East Reserves (1999)

Pantanal Conservation Area (2000)

Brazilian Atlantic Islands: Fernando de Noronha and Atol das Rocas Reserves (2001)

## Colombia

Malpelo Fauna and Flora Sanctuary (2006)

## Costa Rica

Talamanca Range-La Amistad Reserves / La Amistad National Park (1983, 1990) \*

## Cuba

Desembarco del Granma National Park (1999)

## Ecuador

Galápagos Islands (1978, 2001)

Sangay National Park (1983) #

## Honduras

Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve (1982)

## Mexico

Sian Ka'an (1987)

Islands and Protected Areas of the Gulf of California (2005, 2007)

## Panama

Darien National Park (1981)

Talamanca Range-La Amistad Reserves / La Amistad National Park (1983, 1990) \*

## Peru

Huascarán National Park (1985) #

## Saint Lucia

Pitons Management Area (2004)

## Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

Canaima National Park (1994)

## 5.0 Conclusion

The characteristics of Mission Beach that have been identified in the previous sections that give the region high levels of aesthetic and lifestyle values include:

- Images of 'tropical-ness'
- Rainforest landscapes
- Rare and endangered plants and animals
- Great Barrier Reef
- Coastal views and seascapes
- Beaches and islands
- Village-style atmosphere
- Lack of crowds
- Low-key urban development
- Low levels of traffic
- Peaceful, quiet atmosphere
- Environmentally-oriented community
- Multi-cultural community
- Agricultural landscapes and produce

Consequently, the aesthetic/lifestyle significance of Mission Beach can be summarised as representing specific, and in some cases, unique natural and cultural characteristics that are valued by residents and visitors alike.



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