

The Kuranda Region Wet Tropics Corridor Dilemma

Kuranda Region – Worth Protecting

The Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (WTWHA) of north Queensland is of immense value for its biological, cultural and scenic values. The World Heritage Area is subject to international treaty by the Australian government. This designation cannot be underplayed; it is the highest recognition provided of its values to humanity and planet Earth with an ironclad commitment to preserve those values by member states. The Area was ranked 6th out of 173,000 protected areas in the world for critical protection and irreplaceability by a wide range of world scientists in 2010. Its importance has not diminished but rather has increased due to deterioration of other key World Heritage assets like the Great Barrier Reef.

The Kuranda section, east from the top of the coastal range, west to Davies Creek and Closely River, north through Black Mountain Road to Julatten touching Mt Lewis, and south to the border of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area is an essential corridor and is one of its most threatened sections. Threats are largely human driven through urbanisation and climate change.

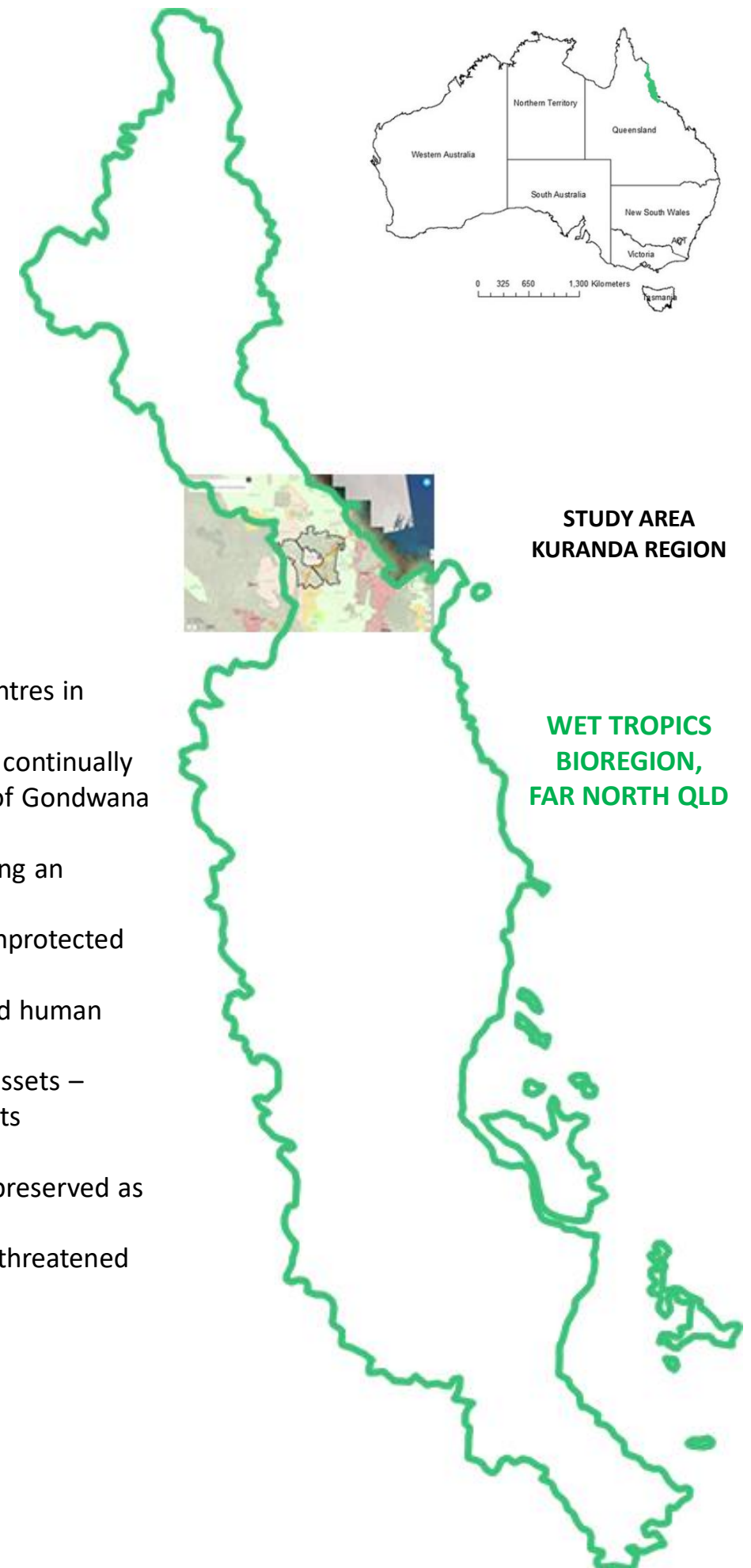
Further significant features and threats:

- The 'Kuranda Corridor' is an active centre for evolutionary biology. It is one of the very few biological centres in Australia where new terrestrial species are likely to evolve.
- It is a part of the original Gondwana forests. The Wet Tropics rainforests are considered to be the oldest continually surviving rainforests in the world because they contain so many plants inherited from the ancient stock of Gondwana and is considered a birthplace of the evolution of flowering plants over 70 million years ago.
- Kuranda links the wider Bellenden Ker bioregion with Mt Lewis, Daintree and Windsor Tableland providing an essential transfer of genetics north and south.
- It is the narrowest section of the WTWHA and is the most threatened by development on surrounding unprotected lands and road building.
- The likely upgrade of Kuranda Range road will cause huge impacts and a substantial increase in traffic and human activity coupled with population increase.
- There are approximately 120 blocks of private land 30 and 60 hectares in size with significant biological assets – generally World Heritage quality - whose future will directly impact on the WTWHA and values, notably its biodiversity.
- There are existing ways to offer protection of these valuable biological assets where rights to reside are preserved as well.
- All conservation / preservation strategies call on protecting core biological assets as the top priority and threatened sections of core assets are first in line for action. Kuranda is right at the top of the priority list today.

Bill Sokolich, Kuranda Region

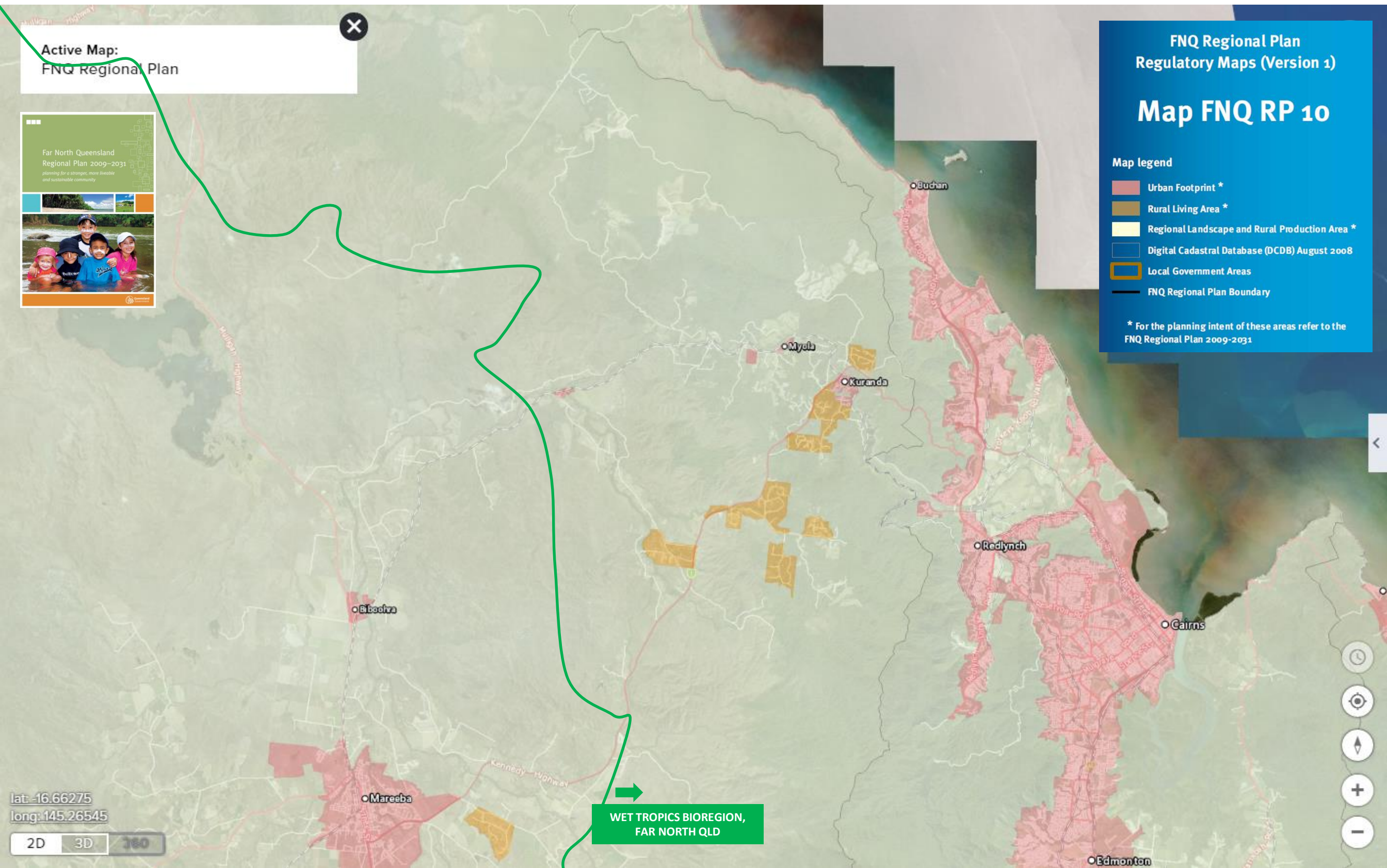
For further important details please read ...

<https://www.wettropics.gov.au/living-museum>; <https://www.wettropics.gov.au/biodiversity>;
<https://www.wettropics.gov.au/outstanding-universal-value>



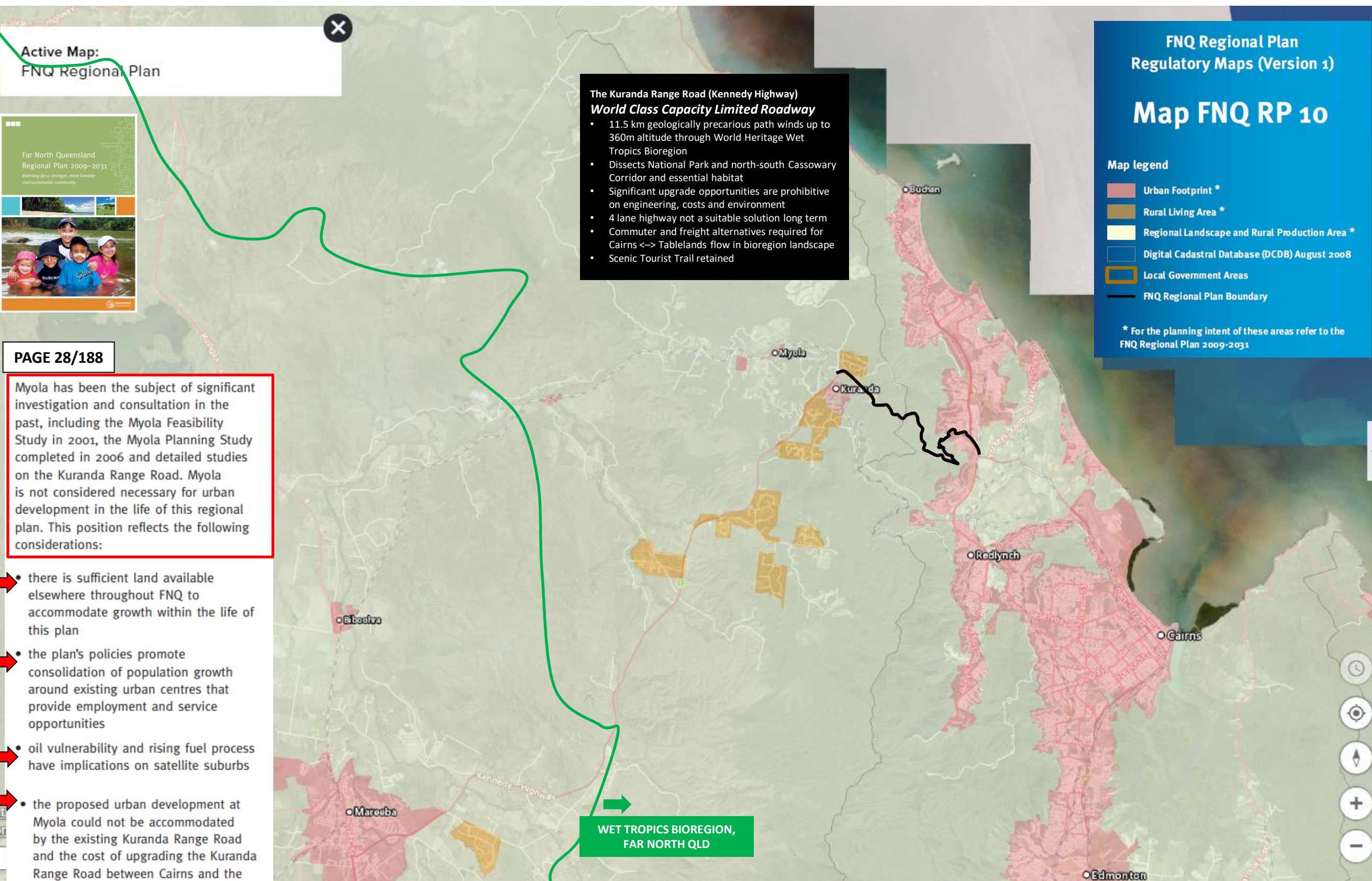
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STUDY AREA

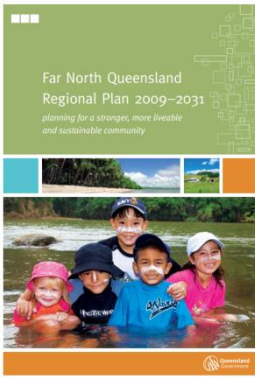


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STUDY AREA



Active Map:
FNQ Regional Plan



The Kuranda Range Road (Kennedy Highway)
World Class Capacity Limited Roadway

- 11.5 km geologically precarious path winds up to 360m altitude through World Heritage Wet Tropics Bioregion
- Dissects National Park and north-south Cassowary Corridor and essential habitat
- Significant upgrade opportunities are prohibitive on engineering, costs and environment
- 4 lane highway not a suitable solution long term
- Commuter and freight alternatives required for Cairns <-> Tablelands flow in bioregion landscape
- Scenic Tourist Trail retained

FNQ Regional Plan
Regulatory Maps (Version 1)

Map FNQ RP 10

Map legend

- Urban Footprint *
- Rural Living Area *
- Regional Landscape and Rural Production Area *
- Digital Cadastral Database (DCDB) August 2008
- Local Government Areas
- FNQ Regional Plan Boundary

* For the planning intent of these areas refer to the FNQ Regional Plan 2009-2031

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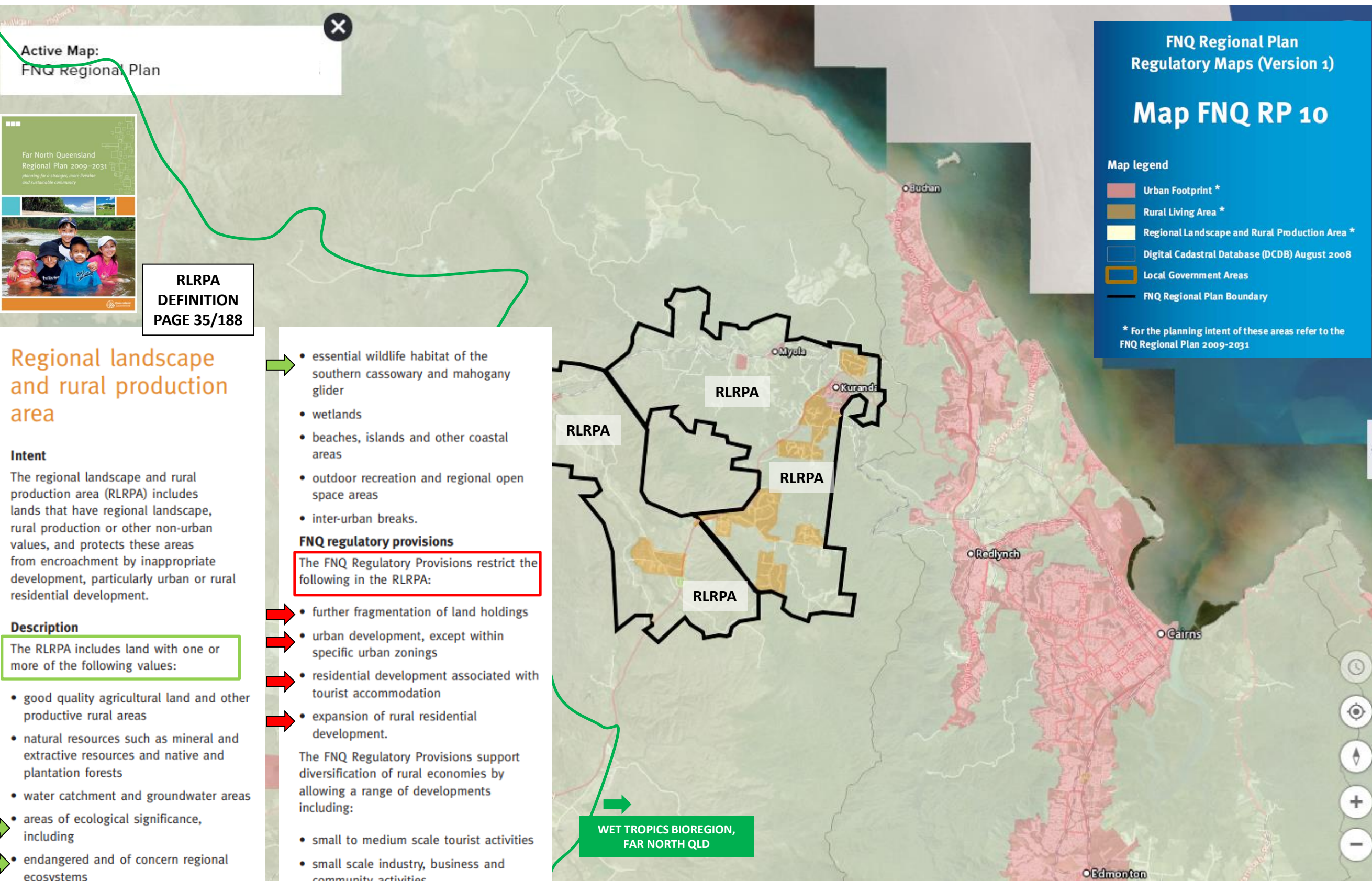
Myola has been the subject of significant investigation and consultation in the past, including the Myola Feasibility Study in 2001, the Myola Planning Study completed in 2006 and detailed studies on the Kuranda Range Road. Myola is not considered necessary for urban development in the life of this regional plan. This position reflects the following considerations:

- there is sufficient land available elsewhere throughout FNQ to accommodate growth within the life of this plan
- the plan's policies promote consolidation of population growth around existing urban centres that provide employment and service opportunities
- oil vulnerability and rising fuel prices have implications on satellite suburbs
- the proposed urban development at Myola could not be accommodated by the existing Kuranda Range Road and the cost of upgrading the Kuranda Range Road between Cairns and the northern Tablelands is unaffordable in the short to medium term, in a regional and state-wide context.

**WET TROPICS BIOREGION,
FAR NORTH QLD**

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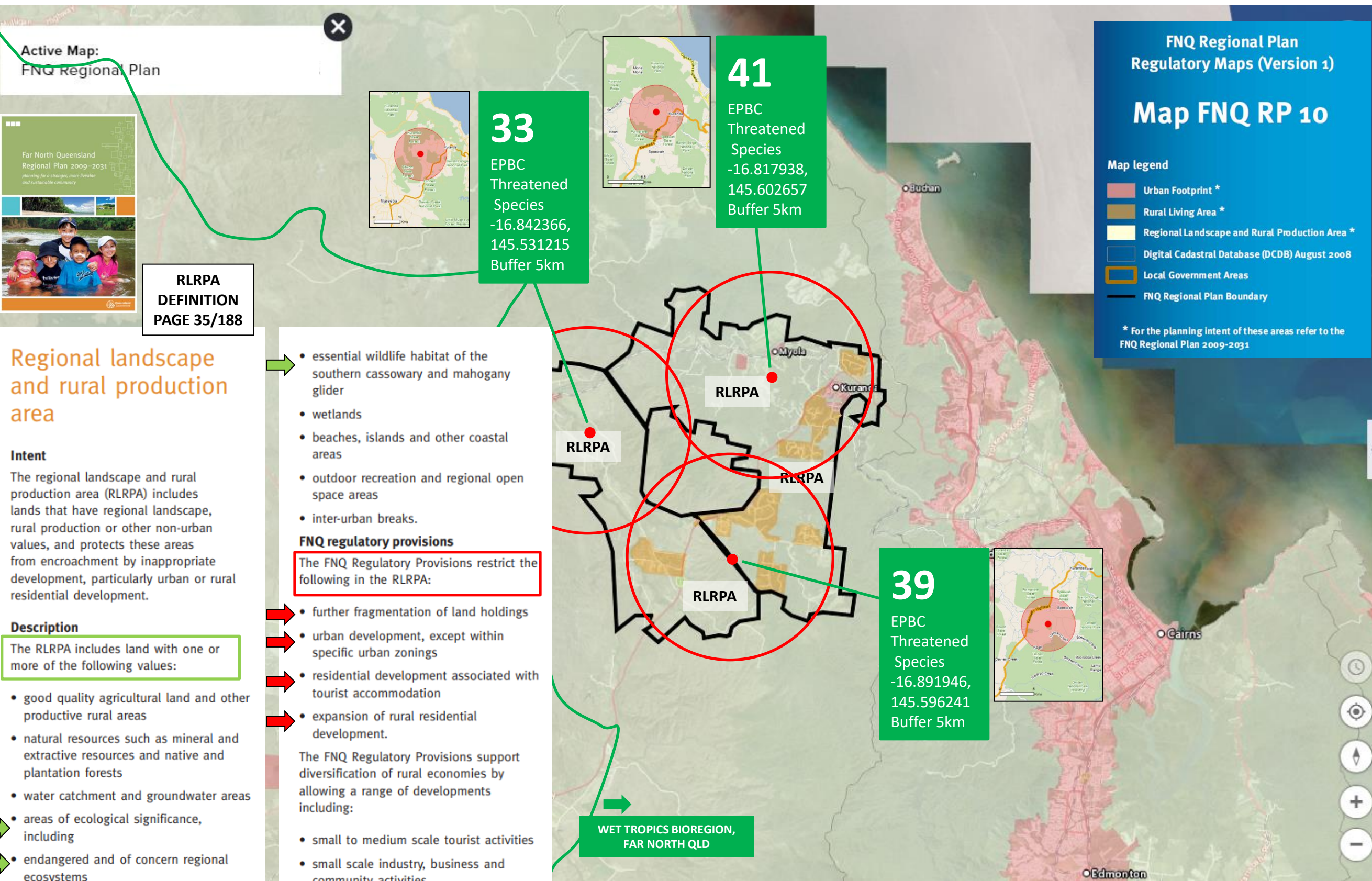
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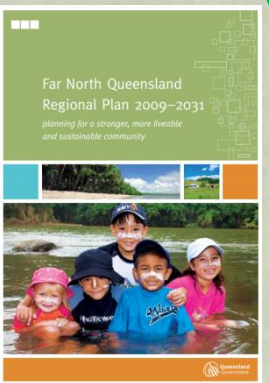
(Ecological Corridor)

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STUDY AREA



Active Map:
FNQ Regional Plan



**RLRPA
DEFINITION
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Regional landscape and rural production area

Intent
The regional landscape and rural production area (RLRPA) includes lands that have regional landscape, rural production or other non-urban values, and protects these areas from encroachment by inappropriate development, particularly urban or rural residential development.

- Description**
The RLRPA includes land with one or more of the following values:
- good quality agricultural land and other productive rural areas
 - natural resources such as mineral and extractive resources and native and plantation forests
 - water catchment and groundwater areas
 - areas of ecological significance, including
 - endangered and of concern regional ecosystems
 - Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and protected area tenures

- essential wildlife habitat of the southern cassowary and mahogany glider
 - wetlands
 - beaches, islands and other coastal areas
 - outdoor recreation and regional open space areas
 - inter-urban breaks.
- FNQ regulatory provisions**
The FNQ Regulatory Provisions restrict the following in the RLRPA:
- further fragmentation of land holdings
 - urban development, except within specific urban zonings
 - residential development associated with tourist accommodation
 - expansion of rural residential development.
- The FNQ Regulatory Provisions support diversification of rural economies by allowing a range of developments including:
- small to medium scale tourist activities
 - small scale industry, business and community activities
 - sport and recreation facilities.

**WET TROPICS BIOREGION,
FAR NORTH QLD**

**FNQ Regional Plan
Regulatory Maps (Version 1)**

Map FNQ RP 10

Map legend

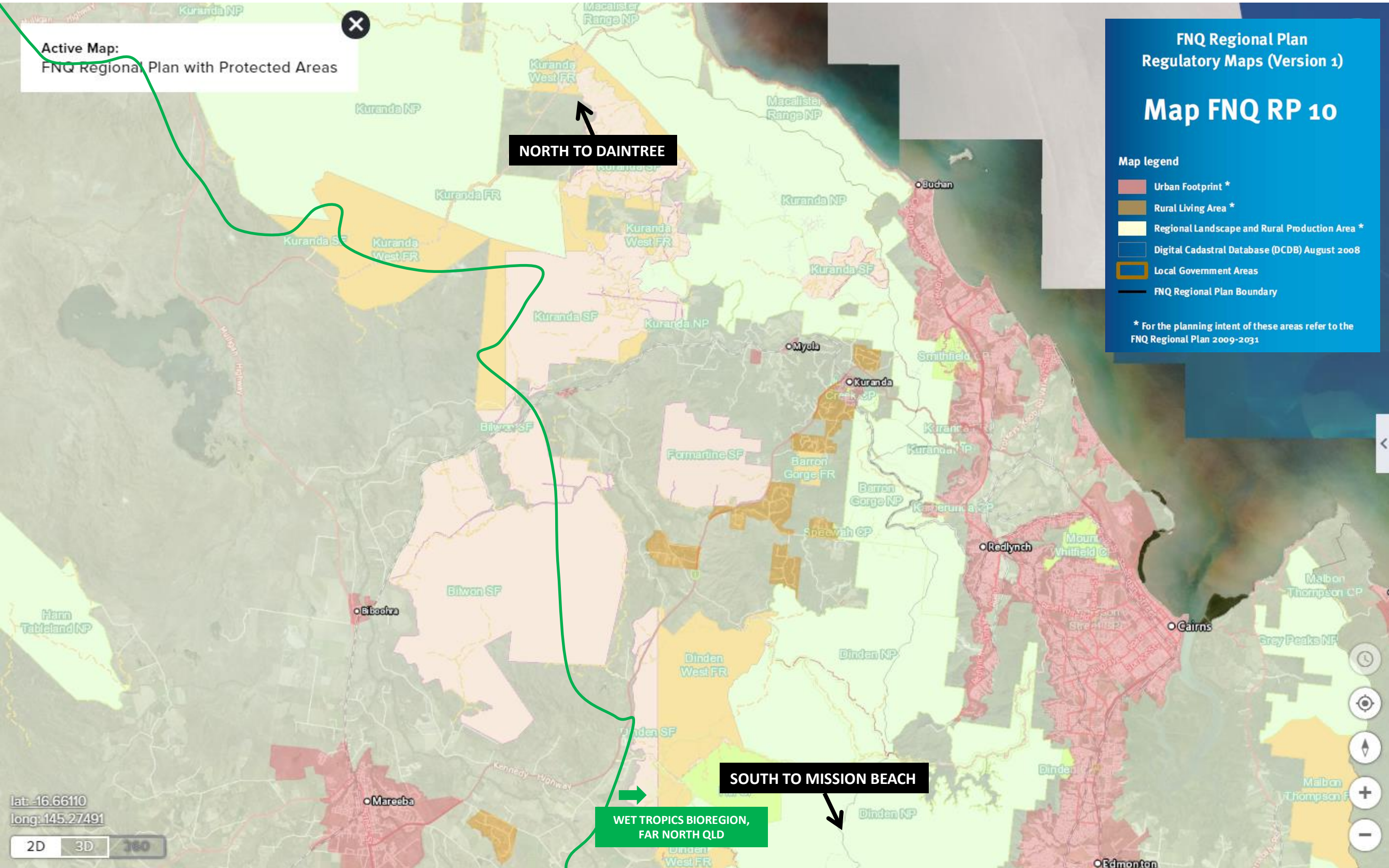
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(Ecological Corridor)

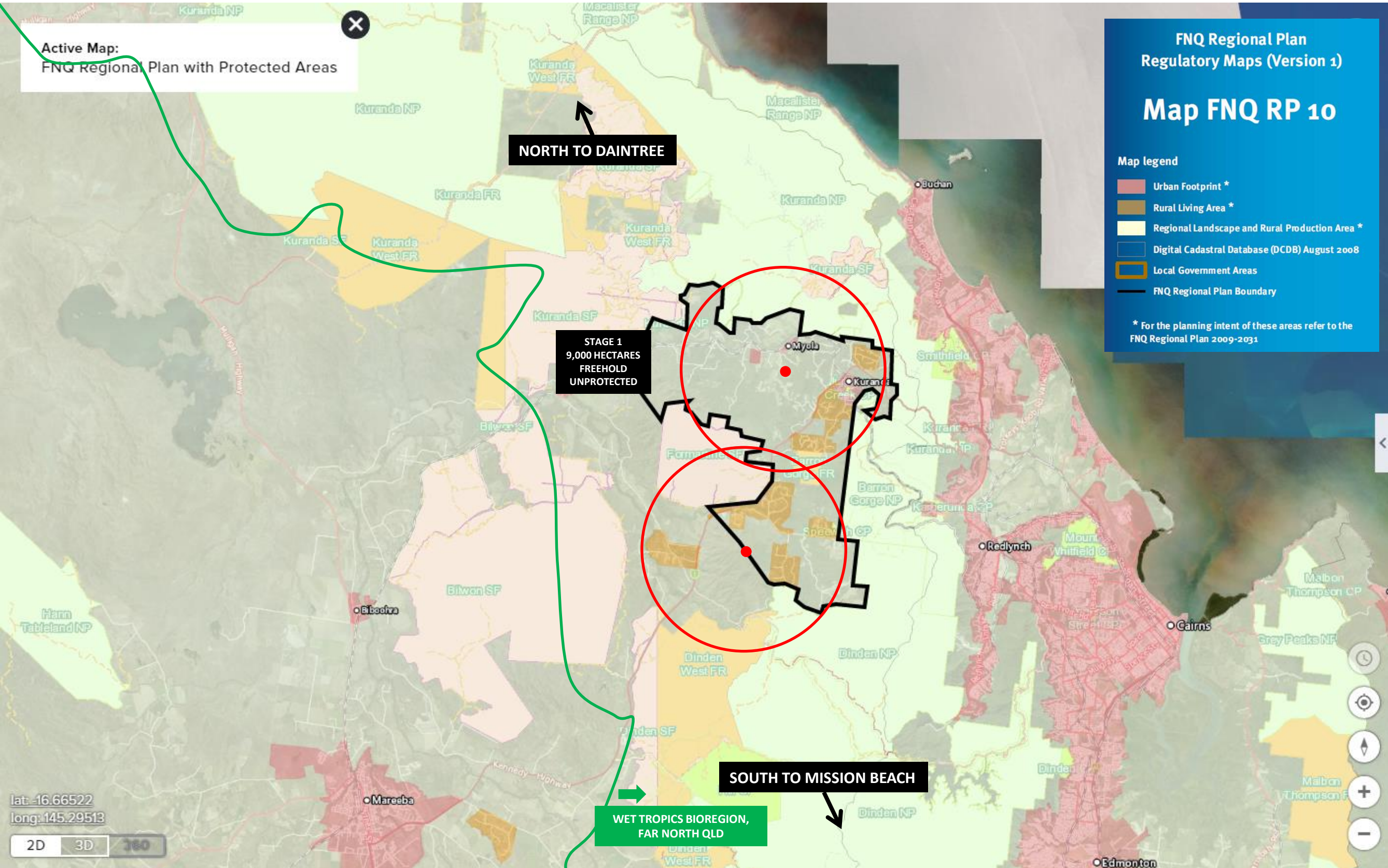
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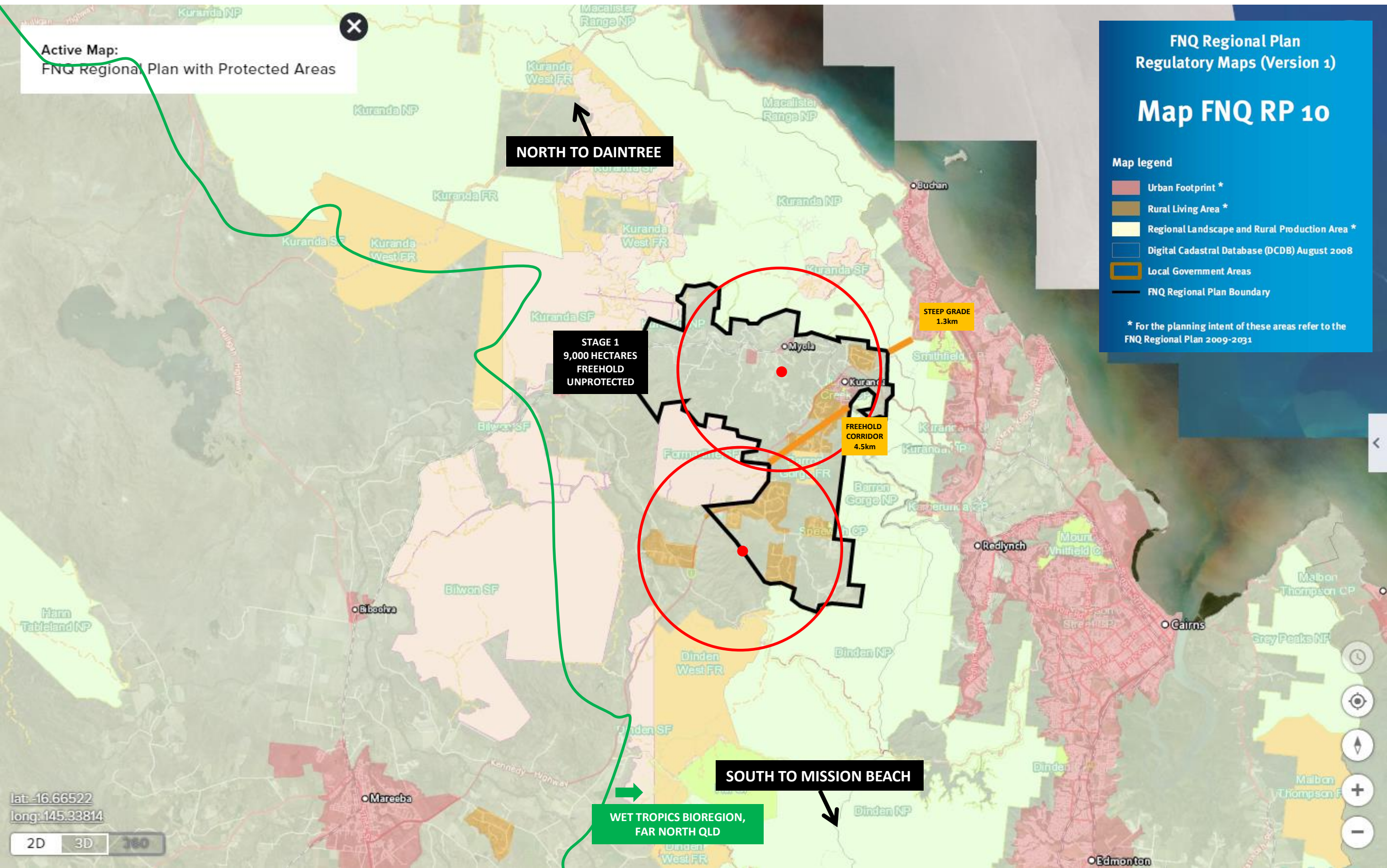
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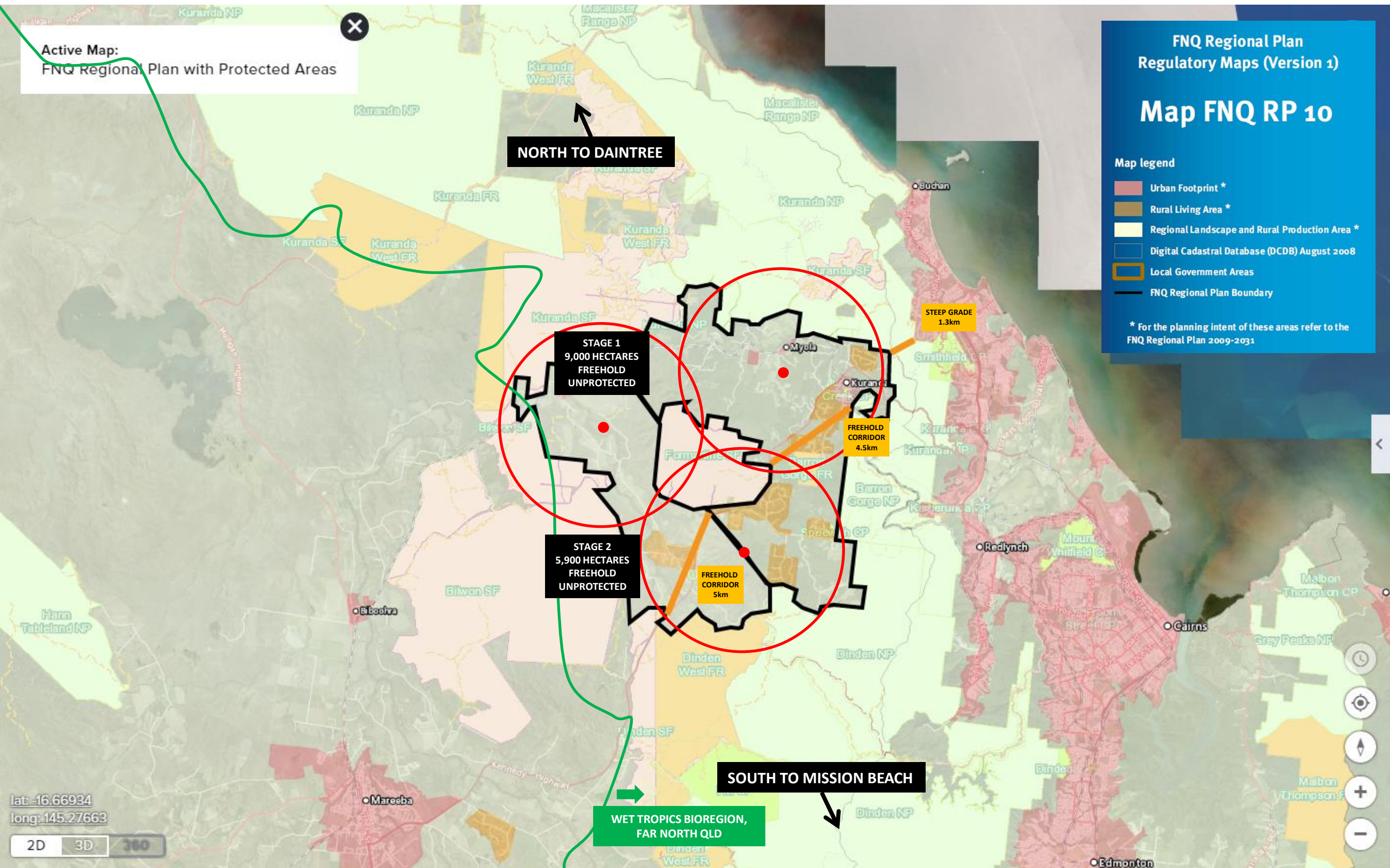
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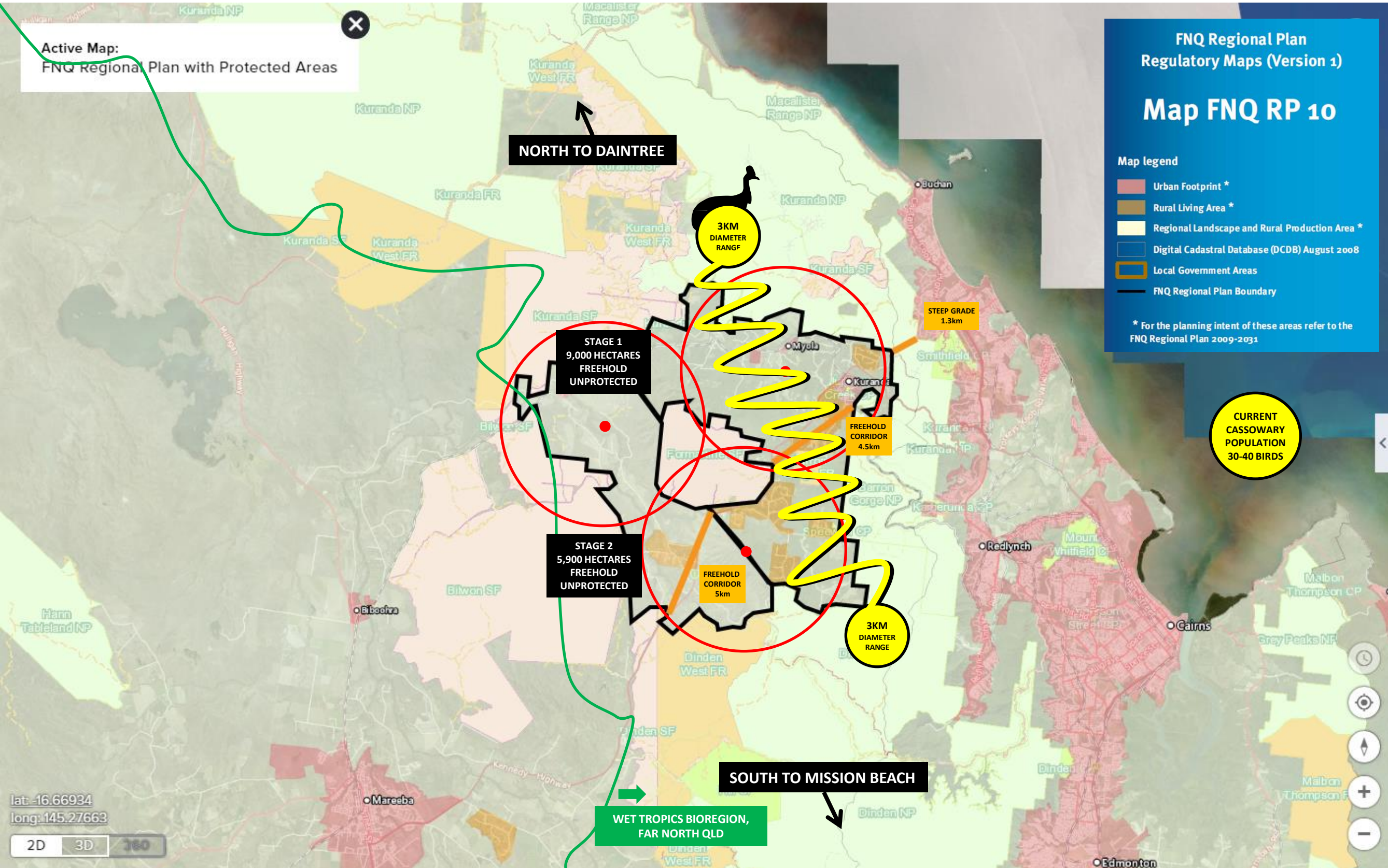
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*“On the Australian continent, we’re talking about **1,000th** of Australia’s continental land area.*

*A major analysis which looked at the biogeographic and the biological uniqueness and irreplaceability of different ecosystems on the planet
– this was over **173,000** different protected areas on the planet
– ranked the **Wet Tropics World Heritage Area as the 6th most critical and irreplaceable.***

***Of World Heritage Areas, it was the 2nd most critical and irreplaceable.**
I think this gives you global perspective on what we’re talking about here. Anybody, from anywhere on the planet, looking around would say **this is absolutely critical biological and environmental real estate.***

***You would not want to risk it**
– from an International, from a global perspective – for lots of different reasons.”*

Speaking at STOP KUR-WORLD FUNDRAISER, Friday 28 July 2017
about World Heritage Wet Tropics Bioregion generally and Myola Valley site of “KUR-World”, specifically.



Distinguished Professor Bill Laurance
College of Science & Engineering
Centre for Tropical Environmental Sustainability Science (TESS)

*“It is fundamentally important, **30 years on from World Heritage listing of the Wet Tropics of Queensland, to ensure that what remains is protected and that further incursions into the bioregion are tightly restrained.**
Government support for **improving protection out comes for remaining critical habitat on freehold land is the first vital step to protecting the bioregion for the future.**”*

SUPPORTING LETTER FOR
Kuranda Conservation Rainforest Trust Application, 27 February 2018
RE: SUPPORT TO CREATE A NEW PROTECTED AREA THROUGH LAND PURCHASE OR DESIGNATION AS AN OFFICIALLY RECOGNISED PROTECTED AREA (BARNWELL ESTATE)

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“The Kuranda region represents the interface between two complex problems facing the future of the Wet Tropics region. As the critical biological link between the northern and southern parts of the Wet Tropics World Heritage area (and as a key nature-based tourism asset), the maintenance of natural connectivity and amenity is crucial. Equally, with significant growth likely in the Mareeba area and beyond, its role as a critical freight and transport corridor between Cairns and the tablelands also needs to be secured. With seriously good and well engaged planning, truly innovative solutions to this complex dilemma can be found.”

Dr Allan Dale Professor of Tropical Regional Development, The Cairns Institute, James Cook University

