

# Regional design for regional benefit: Cassowary Credits



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**Bronwyn Robertson**  
Terrain NRM

Terrain NRM designed their own biodiversity credit scheme to meet the environmental and community needs of the Wet Tropics in far north-east Queensland.

Tropical North Queensland is home to two interconnected World Heritage areas – the Wet Tropics Rainforest and the Great Barrier Reef. The area is a biodiversity hotspot, but is threatened by development pressure, invasive species and climate change.

## THE CHALLENGE

Bronwyn Robertson, Project Leader at Terrain NRM, said science shows that repairing and restoring forest areas is one of the most important things for building resilience against threats to the Wet Tropics.

“In our region building a resilient landscape means connecting up some of those fragmented remnants, expanding really critical high altitude upland forest areas for climate refuge, and buffering the protected world heritage area. If we can do all those things, we can really build resilience to the threats.”

## A FIT FOR PURPOSE SCHEME

In late 2018, Terrain NRM began investigating environmental market schemes as a way to bring additional investment into the region that would deliver positive outcomes for the environment and communities of the Wet Tropics.

They found that none of the existing schemes would meet the needs of the landscape, with its diverse tropical ecosystems, or explicitly deliver social and cultural benefits to the regional communities. Terrain undertook a feasibility study and engaged with the local community, and Cassowary Credits were born.

“Building the scheme from scratch gave us that opportunity to build in the critical requirements for benefits to flow through to the regional community and Rainforest Aboriginal People.” Bronwyn said.

The scheme provides a framework to quantify the biodiversity gain from projects and convert this to biodiversity credits. Projects will also deliver carbon outcomes and testing is underway to determine if a Cassowary Credit project can be stacked with a carbon project to generate both biodiversity and carbon credits.

After nearly five years of feasibility studies, community engagement, methodology and scheme design, technical review, testing field methods and establishing independent governance, in 2024 pilot projects are underway.

## How do Cassowary Credits work?

A Cassowary Credit represents a unit of rainforest condition improvement.

The process is:

1. Landholder applies to conduct a restoration project in accordance with approved Standard methodologies.
2. Agreements are negotiated with Rainforest Aboriginal People.
3. The project is implemented, maintained and monitored.
4. Outcomes are independently validated & credits calculated.
5. Credits are generated & purchased by an investor.
6. Benefit flows back to the environment and communities.

## MORE INFORMATION

Bronwyn Robertson  
Project Leader, Biodiversity & Climate  
terrain.org.au  
bronwyn.robertson@terrain.org.au

*NRM Regions Australia acknowledges Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia where we live and work. We pay our respect to First Nations cultures and to Elders past and present.*