

Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority Bill 2026

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Response to the Queensland Government's Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority Bill 2026

The introduction of the Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority Bill 2026 by Hon Brent Mickelberg, Minister for Transport and Main Roads, has been framed as a "fresh start" for managing our waterways. However, for the Noosa community, it represents something quite different: a top-down decision made without genuine local consultation, imposing an expensive and unnecessary layer of governance on a system that our community has been implementing for the past 4 years.

Despite claims of "18 months of engagement" there has been no meaningful consultation with the Noosa community or with our elected representative, Sandy Bolton MP, or the Kabi Kabi traditional owners. A reform of this scale that fundamentally changes how our river and adjoining waterways are governed should not proceed without clear, transparent, and inclusive local input. That has not occurred.

The 2025 Healthy Land and Water Report Card confirms the Noosa catchment is in "very good" condition with improving freshwater health and strong ecological indicators. This is not a system in crisis. It is a system that, while not perfect, is being effectively managed through existing structures, community stewardship, and targeted interventions.

Creating a new statutory authority to fix a problem that has not been demonstrated raises serious questions about both necessity and intent.

\$35.6 Million for More Bureaucracy

The allocation of \$35.6 million over three years is significant. Yet rather than directing these funds into on-ground monitoring and management by Maritime Safety Queensland, the Government has chosen to invest in a new administrative body and further bureaucracy.

Rebranding it as a "one-stop-shop" does not change the reality that Maritime Safety Queensland will have three areas with differing responsibilities; the Gold Coast Waterways Authority, the proposed Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority and the rest of Queensland. If coordination is the issue, then strengthening collaboration between existing bodies would be a more efficient and accountable approach than building a new structure from scratch.

In a Facebook post and press release to Noosa Today on 8th March 2026, Senior Policy Advisor to Hon Ros Bates, Minister for Finance, Trade, Employment and Training, Leigh McCready, dismissed community concerns about the lack of local representation on the newly created Board declaring the concerns were "irrelevant." For the Noosa community, it is anything but irrelevant. Despite Noosa's globally recognised river system and strong record of environmental management, the proposed Bill does not require a Noosa representative on the Authority's board. Decisions affecting Noosa's waterways could therefore be made without any direct local voice at the table.

The proposed Authority shifts decision-making away from local communities to a regionally appointed board, reporting to the Minister. This is not a strengthening of local voices, it is a centralisation of power to an unelected group. Local knowledge, lived experience, and community connection should not be sidelined in favour of distant oversight.

Noosa has demonstrated that community, council, and state collaboration can deliver strong environmental outcomes. The river's current health is evidence of that success.

Noosa deserves:

- Genuine consultation before major governance changes are imposed
- Guaranteed local representation in decisions affecting its waterways
- Investment in practical, evidence-based environmental management
- Respect for a community that has consistently demonstrated leadership in protecting its natural assets

The Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority Bill 2026 may claim simplicity, coordination, and improved outcomes but without consultation, without guaranteed representation, and without a clearly defined problem to solve, it risks becoming an expensive solution in search of justification.

We do not need another expensive layer of bureaucracy imposed from Brisbane. We need the Queensland State Government to adequately fund Maritime Safety Queensland to manage and monitor our waterways as they are already tasked to do.