

Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority Bill 2026

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Submission on the Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority

Across the past 12 months the Sunshine Coast, in particular the Caloundra region, has been exposed to a weather situation which highlighted the need for adequate management of the magnificent waterway and landscape within the protected Bribie Island National Park and the waters of the Pumicestone Passage, part of the Moreton Bay Marine Park and Internationally protected within the Ramsar Treaty.

The management of this region has been sadly lacking for many, many years.

Urgent works carried out to restore Bribie Island and the waterway show how crucial good management of this unique place is. The first stages are now complete. Additional recommendations arising out of the independent Inquiry's examination are expected to drive actions going forward.

The opportunity to attract skills and global experience of Coastal Engineers qualified to undertake the inquiry and make recommendations was timely, and required the collaboration of three levels of government to achieve an outcome not only to deal with the current issue, but set the foundation for conservation of this remarkable ecology for the future.

The likelihood of our area here at Diamond Head (Golden Beach) to be impacted by the worst of future severe weather events galvanised the local community.

Local environmental and community groups, PPCMB (Pumicestone Passage Catchment Management Body) and Take Action for Pumicestone Passage - TAPP Inc led the surge of community need to be adequately informed about what was happening and what was to come. The politicians delivered.

Our community and our politicians can be proud of the outcome, but this is just the beginning for us. With heightened awareness, residents of this region are now focused on far better management practices for our protected waterways and coastal landscape and expect this going forward.

The work is just beginning.

We acknowledge the need for a Sunshine Coast Waterway Authority.

However, I wonder if this entity as suggested will hold the remit to ensure this remarkable place is adequately managed into the future?

Many of us hold dear the need to leave a legacy for future communities, not exploit our region for fast tourist \$\$ or lose it through poorly thought-through legislation.

More than delivering on a 'political election promise' the need for effective, appropriate and well considered legislation is critical.

Already, population growth within our region is huge and projected to expand. In my view, one of the most significant risks to the economic and lived amenity here (as evidenced on the Gold Coast already) are the exponential amenity and environmental impacts arising out of increased public need for recreational use.

The recently announced 'Destination 2045' plan for tourism must be well considered and structured to not just represent a chance to exploit the environment, but deliver true 'eco-tourism' that is respectful and sustainable. The legislation needs to address that.

The SCWA does not seem to acknowledge what is unique in our region's waterways within the whole of South East Queensland. This causes me significant concern.

- I support the creation of a dedicated waterways authority, and again emphasise the Pumicestone Passage's unique characteristics and challenges that require tailored management and long-term active oversight, including removing the capacity and risk for populist 'love to death' experiences generated by mainstream tourism.
- The new authority must recognise the unique environmental and coastal dynamics of Pumicestone Passage. The landscape is fragile, vulnerable and volatile:
 - The importance of prioritising long-term rectification works and active management of the Bribie Island barrier system.
 - The value of strong scientific monitoring and evidence-based management.

- The need for meaningful community involvement through reference groups and consultation.
- The importance of protecting the environmental, economic and tourism value of the Passage for future generations.
- The need for a balance of relevant skill and expertise in the recruitment of SCWA board members.
- The importance of measurable targets and regular reporting and review processes to guide and guarantee accountability of the work of the SCWA.

This legislation is an opportunity to finally address decades of fragmented management and ensure the long-term health of our waterways.

Thank you for considering my submission.