

# Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority Bill 2026

**Submission No:** 072

**Submission By:** Boating Industry Association Ltd

**Publication:** Making the submission and your name public

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# Submission



**ISSUE:** Sunshine Coast Waterway Authority

**SUBJECT:** Feedback on the Bill to establish SCWA

## **INTRODUCTION:**

The Boating Industry Association Ltd (BIA) is the peak industry body in Australia that represents the interests of boating which includes designers, manufacturers, importers, brokers, insurers, retailers, charters, yacht and boat clubs, marinas, events, surveyors and trades from boat builders to riggers, and more. BIA is an advocate for boaters and the boating lifestyle and supports safe, responsible, and enjoyable boating. BIA has members in all States and Territories.

The boating economy generates significant benefits. The BIA last year reported industry national turnover of \$10.12 billion and employed more than 35,000 people. Seventy-five per cent are in small family businesses, employing local workers and supporting local communities.

In Australia, more than 85 per cent of the population live within 50km of the coast, so it is little wonder that almost 1 in 5 households can have a boat or watercraft and that approximately 5 million go boating each year. People of all ages, gender and ability participate in boating across paddle, sail and power for leisure and sport.

Queensland is considered the boating capital of Australia, with an estimated 34 per cent of its population participating in some form of boating activity each year.

Based on a Queensland population of over 5.5 million (as of 2024–2025), this indicates well over 1.8 million people go boating annually in the State.

Key statistics regarding boating in Queensland:

- Queensland is the national powerhouse for the boating industry with more than \$4 billion in turnover last year and more than 14,000 people employed.
- Licensed Boaters: As of 2026, there were more than 1 million licensed boaters in Queensland.
- Registered Vessels: Queensland holds the highest number of registered recreational vessels in Australia, with over 274,000–278,000 registered as of 2023–2025.
- Household Participation: Almost 1 in 5 households in Queensland owns a boat or watercraft.
- Boating Type: The majority of activity involves family runabouts and small craft (paddle and sail).

- The *BIA National Recreational Boating Statement (2025)* states the purpose of boating for 49 percent of people is to go fishing. Which makes catching food for the table at home is a major motivator for many of the 5 million people who go boating each year in Australia.
- The *Statement* also indicates continued growth in boating and that more than \$20 billion will be spent nationally on boating and watercraft related goods and services by 2030.

The popularity of boating in Queensland is driven by its 6,000+ kilometres of coastline, favourable climate and extensive access to its network of waterways.

## Timelines

- 4 March, Wednesday - The Qld Government introduced the Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority Bill 2026 into the Queensland Parliament. The details are [here](#). This included a [public notice calling for submissions](#).
- **20 March, Friday (at 12pm (midday) - Deadline for submissions** which are to be loaded up onto a Qld Govt website [here](#)
- 17 April, Friday - The Govt committee is due to table its report on feedback. The report will be published [here](#).

## SUBMISSION:

The BIA welcomes the Qld Government invitation to make submissions on this matter which has consequences for key priorities for the industry which includes promoting actions by governments to enhance boating through better regulation, red tape reduction, putting education before regulation along with improved access and infrastructure, support for marine jobs and incentivising private sector investment which includes public infrastructure such as marinas.

BIA also acknowledges the establishment of the SCWA was an election commitment and we welcome the opportunity to work constructively with this new Authority in support of our key priorities.

The submission is made on behalf of the BIA.

## Re., Minister's media release of 5 March 2025:

The Minister's statements in the media release included:

'The independent statutory authority will oversee waterways from Pumicestone Passage to the Noosa River and Noosa Lakes, including the Mooloolah River and the Mooloolaba State Boat Harbour.

'SCWA will be responsible for long-term marine planning, dredging and maintenance of declared channels, and the delivery and upkeep of essential marine infrastructure such as jetties and boat ramps.'

[BIA welcomes the Minister's statement and outlining of scope.](#)

**Re., in the media release the SCWA was described as ‘a one-stop-shop to deliver trusted local knowledge for all water users’.**

BIA recommends consistency and clarity of messaging. It is important the public are not confused about the role of SCWA and terms such as “one stop shop” ignores the fact that other government departments across Local, State and Federal sectors have remits that overlay the waterways. In one example, all commercial vessels in Australia operate under the Federal National Law for Domestic Commercial Vessels, not the State. Also MSQ is responsible for boating/ vessel safety, safety compliance, enforcement and maritime emergency response under National and International obligations. That can range from the National Plan for Maritime Environmental Emergencies to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) which is the United Nations specialised agency responsible for setting the international obligations, standards, and regulations for the safety, security, and efficiency of navigation in international shipping. Working as an international peer organisation to IMO is International Organisation for Marine Aids to Navigation (IALA). IALA develops technical recommendations and guidelines for Aids to Navigation (AtoN), which the IMO recognises and often adopts into its regulatory framework. Australia’s national cluster of State and Territory maritime regulators observe IMO and IALA in support of safe navigation for all vessels from shipping down to paddle craft.

**Recommendation:** The QLD Government and SCWA makes every effort to minimise duplication, confusion with other bodies and makes its eventual intent and purpose clear – including on the SCWA website - to recreational and commercial boat operators, marine industry, the public and other key stakeholders.

**Re., the media release included a statement that: ‘Maritime Safety Queensland will remain the state’s maritime regulator, responsible for pollution management, safety compliance, education, enforcement and emergency response.’**

BIA notes there is one key element missing from this description and that is safe navigation. Across Australia under its Federated structure, State authorities have sole responsibility for safe navigation which delivers clear lines of responsibility for water traffic management and boating safety nationwide. Safe navigation clearly picks up: ‘safety compliance, education, enforcement and emergency response’ but that also picks up the water traffic signage system of aids to navigation to keep mariners safe day and night.

**Recommendation:** SCWA role is not to duplicate existing responsibilities but rather to gather intelligence to inform any modifications to the safe navigation water traffic sign network (aids to navigation) and to deliver any such safe navigation signage under the guidance of MSQ.

## **About the Bill**

The Qld Government stated the proposed functions of the SCWA Bill include to:

- plan strategically for the management of the Sunshine Coast waterways by developing a waterways management strategy, that considers the benefits and impacts for the local community, local environment, and local marine industries, tourism and economy

**BIA recommendation:** to support this function and stand by ready to assist SCWA in this work.

- develop a waterways management program to implement the waterways management strategy

BIA recommendation: to support this function and stand by ready to assist SCWA in this work.

- install, manage and maintain infrastructure for the Sunshine Coast waterways

BIA recommendation: to support this function and stand by ready to assist SCWA particularly in areas such as real time boating activity data.

- manage navigational access to, and within, the Sunshine Coast waterways

BIA recommendation: Every effort should be made to eliminate confusion and duplication, and 'manage navigation access' crosses into the higher function of **safe navigation**. MSQ, like every other maritime regulator in Australia has a core role to manage safe navigation in its jurisdiction. That is achieved by a safe system approach where those authorities manage the safety of people, the vessels and the jurisdiction's waterways (with few exceptions). Safe navigation is fundamentally about preventing harm to people, the environment and the economy. BIA supports this clarity of purpose.

BIA recommends an amendment to this proposed function, to read: '**deliver** navigational access to, and within, the Sunshine Coast waterways'. SCWA should 'deliver' this navigation function through infrastructure projects, which includes dredging, and by working with MSQ who hold and lead on safe navigation outcomes under its core responsibilities that include education, compliance, enforcement for the recreational, commercial and shipping sectors, and the international system of water traffic signage/ aids to navigation.

- monitor and manage sand and sediment movement in Sunshine Coast waterways and adjacent coastal waters and land.

BIA supports this function and stands by ready to assist SCWA which should consult and work with the Gold Coast Waterway Authority who has years of experience in managing sand and sediment movement on Gold Coast waterways. This work will be influenced by climate change and the risk of increasing extreme weather, tidal surges and sea level rise which will impact many other coastal areas. It is therefore important the SCWA is supported to not only collect relevant data and information but also to share learnings with MSQ and other State Government departments as appropriate to help other locations mitigate against such risks as and when needed.

## Comments on the BILL

Part 2, Division 2, 12 Functions (a), (b) and (c)

BIA recommends this function is determined in collaboration with MSQ to minimise duplication, confusion and unnecessary expenditure, and to make use of the learnings from the MSQ Waterway Management Plan at Noosa which should be considered as the basis of a model plan to support consistency of approach and outcomes for waterways statewide. Furthermore, re item (c) the way this is written suggests the SCWA has powers of a Harbour Master ie., has powerful responsibilities over the movement of all vessels including shipping. If that is the intent, then this

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function must be resolved with MSQ and the Australian Maritime Safety Authority. The SCWA must also consult with the Gold Coast Waterways Authority especially on the issues of dredging, foreshore infrastructure and place management and to ensure access to GCWA learnings on management of these issues.

Part 3, Division 1 Waterways management strategy, 14 (1)

BIA supports this function and stands by ready to assist SCWA especially in areas such as real time boating activity data.

Part 3, Division 1, 14 (b)

BIA recommends this is amended from its current introverted strategic approach to acknowledge the Sunshine Coast waterways are strategically and intrinsically linked in a safe navigation context to not only its neighbouring waterways but also the waterways of Qld, East Coast of Australia and visiting vessels. BIA recommends this clause is rewritten to read:

*Identify the needs and priorities for the sustainable use, management and develop of Sunshine Coast waterways into the future, having regard to the social, economic and environmental benefits for and impacts on –*

*waterway users (ie., recreational, commercial and shipping)*

*general public*

*marine industry*

*tourism and*

*economy*

Part 3, Division 1, 15 (2) (d) (i)

BIA supports this clause as fulsome consultation with MSQ is integral to success and minimisation of duplication, confusion and costs. This section should also reference the Gold Coast Waterway Authority as an organisation to consult with, especially as the Qld Government had used this organisation as part of the logic for forming a SCWA; this consultation should focus heavily on the GCWA corporate knowledge and information sharing on dredging, foreshore infrastructure and place management.

Part 3, Division 2 Waterways management program, 18, (3) (b)

BIA supports this clause as fulsome consultation with MSQ is integral to success and minimisation of duplication, confusion and costs. BIA supports this clause and stands by ready to assist.

Part 3, Division 2, 19, (a) and (b)

BIA supports this clause however the term 'reasonable steps' gives a sense of 'just enough'. An alternative less opaque phrase should be used re consultation with MSQ, as only fulsome

consultation and ongoing constructive relations with MSQ will deliver success and minimisation of duplication, confusion and costs.

This section should also reference the Gold Coast Waterway Authority as an organisation to consult with, especially as the Qld Government had used this organisation as part of the logic for forming a SCWA; this consultation should focus heavily on the GCWA corporate knowledge and information sharing on dredging, foreshore infrastructure and place management.

Part 4 Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority Board, Division 2, 27 (b)

BIA supports this clause which, if realised, has a chance of being representative of the social, economic, environmental and cultural factors in the region. BIA encourages the State Government to ensure the Board is comprised of qualified, collaborative and independent members.

Part 6 Clause 58

BIA recommends that the GCWA be added to this list of organisations that SCWA should enter into information sharing arrangements to share or exchange information.

In conclusion, BIA is ready and willing to constructively work with the SCWA to enhance outcomes for the boating public (across paddle, power and sail) and the boating industry whilst delivering a balanced approach to social, economic, environmental and cultural benefits.

Please do not hesitate to contact Mr Neil Patchett, General Manager Government & Public Relations, e. [REDACTED] or m. [REDACTED] as necessary on this matter.

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**Approval:** Mr Andrew Fielding, CEO BIA Ltd – the peak body for the boating industry in Australia

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