

# Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority Bill 2026

**Submission No:** 074

**Submission By:** Sunshine Coast Council

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Secretariat for the State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
Brisbane QLD 4000

Via email: [SDIWC@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:SDIWC@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Dear Sir/Madam

**Re: Council submission - Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority Bill**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee on the Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority Bill.

Please note that this submission has been prepared by Council officers and does not reflect the views and opinions of the Sunshine Coast Council.

The State's commitments to improving and promoting the sustainable use of our region's waterways and enabling greater local input into their management is welcomed.

From our shared sustainability perspective, Council's regional Environment and Liveability, Community and Economic Development strategies reflect our community's aspirations for a thriving, resilient and environmentally responsible future.

These integrated strategic directions recognise the importance of healthy, well-managed waterways, reinforced through the Environment and Liveability Strategy's outcomes for Waterways and Wetlands and Coastal areas, which are:

- *waterways and wetlands are healthy, resilient to change and valued by the community; and*

- *our coastal areas are healthy, resilient to climate change impacts and support sustainable use.*

The opportunity presented by the proposed establishment of the authority for more strategic and cohesive management of our highly valued waterways is both acknowledged and supported.

The following recommendations are made for the committee's consideration to strengthen aspects of the Bill and to support its successful implementation. These recommendations relate to the preservation of the iconic natural character of our waterways, the effectiveness of local input and the authority's management scope.

### ***Safeguard the natural values of our coastal waterways***

The retained natural habitats and shorelines of Sunshine Coast estuaries set us apart from other coastal areas in South-East Queensland. They are central to our liveability and local sense of place, nurseries for regional fisheries and a major tourism drawcard.

It is our understanding that the proposed authority could facilitate activities such as dredging, artificial shoreline revetment and construction of infrastructure that have the potential to impact on natural waterway habitats and the economic values they support.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Incorporate safeguards for the preservation of natural waterway habitats into provisions of the Bill, including requirements to avoid or minimise impacts on such habitats and to offset any unavoidable impacts through local habitat restoration projects.
- Consider a nature-positive goal within the management strategy, supported by funding allocations towards habitat restoration projects and compliance programs.

### ***Strengthen local government and community input***

To achieve the State's aim in the Bill for greater local input into waterway management, it is considered critical that there is strong local representation in the authority's ongoing governance arrangements and that there is meaningful engagement in the preparation and implementation of the identified management strategy and program.

### Recommendations:

- Ensure local government representation on the board, either through direct representation from each of the three councils or a mechanism that fairly balances their respective interests.
- Strengthen the commitment to local consultation in Clause 15 by:
  - replacing 'take reasonable steps' with 'commitment to' consultation with the public, councils and MSQ and outlining consultation mechanisms to ensure meaningful participation and empowerment and
  - requiring consideration of local government-endorsed strategies and plans including those relating to environmental and coastal management.

### ***Clarify the authority's scope and functions and relationship with other programs***

Clauses 7 and 12 of the Bill state the authority will primarily oversee the planning and management of infrastructure, navigation and sand and sediment movement within tidal estuaries.

The term 'waterways management' is used regularly throughout the Bill as a broad term encompassing those functions, however this can be confused with a range of other activities, such as:

- regulation of freshwater flows;
- catchment management to reduce loads of pollutants and litter to waterways;
- freshwater and tidal waterway conservation and restoration;
- planning and operational maintenance of canals and other constructed waterbodies;
- entrance management of Intermittently Closed and Open Lakes and Lagoons;
- dredging historical navigational channels for erosion protection; and
- management of on-water activities.

In addition, some authority functions may overlap with existing activities of Council and other organisations, for example, dredging navigational channels for erosion protection and tidal waterway access infrastructure. The Bill and Explanatory Notes provide limited detail on functional boundaries or areas of responsibility.

It is considered the establishment of the authority, recruitment of its board and staff and early and ongoing planning and management activities would all benefit from increased clarity of the geographical scope and relationship between the authority's functions and existing waterway management programs.

Recommendations:

- Define 'waterways management' in Part 1 as it applies for the proposed authority, in addition to the existing definition of 'Sunshine Coast waterways'.
- Clarify the geographical scope for authority functions, for example, defining primary focus areas near the mouths of navigable waters, where most functions would be applicable, and secondary areas in smaller waterways and upper reaches, where only limited functions would occur, like planning and installing access infrastructure.
- After the proposed functions of the authority set out in Clause 12:
  - list other aspects of waterway management that will not be included in the authority's functions and
  - where functions overlap with Council or other organisations, outline which areas or assets the authority will assume responsibility for, or if not yet determined, the principles that will guide these decisions.

Council looks forward to continuing a strong partnership with the State and collaborating with all stakeholders to ensure the long-term health, resilience and sustainable management and use of our Sunshine Coast's waterways.

Should you have any questions relating to this submission please contact Debra Robinson, Council's Director Sustainable Growth and Planning via mobile [REDACTED] or email at [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely



**John Baker**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

cc. Mayor, Rosanna Natoli, Sunshine Coast Council  
Councillors, Sunshine Coast Council  
Debra Robinson, Director, Sustainable Growth and Planning, Sunshine Coast Council