

# Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority Bill 2026

**Submission No:** 079

**Submission By:** Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland - Sunshine Coast & Hinterland Inc

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## **Submission on the Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority Bill 2026**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority Bill 2026 (the Bill).

Sunshine Coast Waterways are important ecological areas known for their diverse marine life, including dugongs, turtles and dolphins, as well as abundant birdlife and fish. There are rich ecosystems of mangroves, seagrass beds, and saltmarshes and the waterways are a refuge for migratory shorebirds. Effective governance and protection of these waterways are essential for the continued health and resilience of these habitats.

While improved coordination and strategically planning for and facilitating the sustainable use, management and development of the Sunshine Coast waterways is a worthwhile objective, Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland – Sunshine Coast and Hinterland Inc (WPSQ) recommend the following amendments and additions to strengthen the Bill.

### **Part 1 4 – Relationship to other Acts**

We recommend the Bill explicitly reference the Water Act 2000 and Vegetation Management Act 1999 to ensure legislative alignment.

Additionally, it should be noted any SCWA strategy, program, or decision should be assessed against and meet obligations under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) and relevant international agreements, including JAMBA, CAMBA, ROKAMBA, the Bonn Convention, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, ACAP, and the East Asian – Australasian Flyway Partnership. This approach mirrors best practice seen in the management frameworks of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority, which integrates national and international obligations to improve environmental outcomes.

### **Part 1 7 - Meaning of Sunshine Coast waterways**

To ensure consistent management and enforcement, we recommend the Bill explicitly define the upstream boundary of SCWA jurisdiction. For clarity and efficacy, the Bill should specify that jurisdiction extends up to the tidal limit or to a well-known landmark, such as the first crossing of the Bruce Highway, and clarify whether artificial canals and modified waterways are included within the scope. This approach aligns with the Brisbane River Management Authority, which uses the tidal limit as a jurisdictional boundary and includes artificial waterways, resulting in improved enforcement and habitat protection. Clear jurisdictional definitions prevent ambiguity and support integrated management across natural and modified waterways.

Riparian zones must also be explicitly protected, as demonstrated in the management of the Swan River Trust in Western Australia, where inclusion of riparian areas has led to measurable improvements in water quality and biodiversity.

## **Part 4 Division 2 25 – Composition**

For robust and transparent governance, broad stakeholder representation including local government and Indigenous representatives has enhanced collaborative decision-making.

WPSQ recommend the Board comprise of a chairperson and 8 other persons.

Ministerial appointments (5, including Chair and at least one from environment/science) from list of qualifications detailed in Division 2 27B

and Ex officio appointments (4, including):

- Sunshine Coast Regional Council;
- Noosa Shire Council;
- Moreton Bay Regional Council;
- Kabi Kabi representative

## **Part 5 Division 1 - Chief executive office**

To strengthen accountability, we recommend the CEO be appointed by the Board, subject to prior written approval from the Minister. This mirrors the appointment process for the CEO of Seqwater, the statutory authority responsible for water supply in South East Queensland.

Board-appointed CEOs have resulted in increased transparency and strengthened trust between management and governance bodies and ensures clear accountability and aligns with best practice for transparent executive appointments in Queensland government-owned entities.

### **Waterways management strategy and program**

We recommend the Bill require binding environmental outcomes, including no net loss of key habitats, water quality standards, and ecological condition indicators. Strategies should incorporate climate change and coastal hazard resilience, with measurable actions, timeframes, monitoring, annual public reporting, and independent review.

The Bill should also require the SCWA to consider and assess cumulative environmental impacts from dredging, infrastructure development, navigation works, and other waterway activities when preparing management strategies and programs. This holistic approach is supported by scientific studies published in the Australasian Journal of Environmental Management, which highlight the importance of cumulative impact assessment for sustainable waterway management.

## **Sand and Sediment Management**

Sand and sediment management must be guided by scientific evidence, require environmental impact assessment, and avoid impacts on seagrass, intertidal flats, and nesting and roosting habitats. The Moreton Bay Sand Management Plan demonstrates that science-based sediment management, coupled with clear environmental safeguards, can effectively protect sensitive habitats and support ecosystem health.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, we recommend that the Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority Bill 2026 be amended to:

- (1) define jurisdiction boundaries explicitly and clarify inclusion of artificial waterways;
- (2) align with relevant legislation and international conventions;
- (3) implement a structured and representative board;
- (4) ensure transparent CEO appointment;
- (5) require binding environmental outcomes and cumulative impact assessment, with annual public reporting; and
- (6) adopt science-based sand and sediment management practices.

Adoption of these recommendations will strengthen the Bill, enhance governance, and safeguard the ecological integrity of the Sunshine Coast Waterways for future generations.

Yours sincerely,

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