

Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority Bill 2026

Submission No: 084

Submission By: Peter Court

Publication: Making the submission and your name public



Submission: Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority Bill 2026

Submitted by: Peter Court

Date: 20 March 2026

This submission provides observations and targeted questions to support the effective design and implementation of the proposed Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority.

The Bill establishes a strong foundation in terms of powers and structure. The key determinant of success will be how the Authority operates in practice, particularly at the interface between strategy, operations and multi agency coordination.

In similar complex marine environments, clarity in operating model and governance has proven critical to avoiding policy heavy structures that struggle to deliver practical outcomes.

1. Strategic Purpose

What is the primary problem the Authority is intended to solve?

Navigation

Environmental protection

User conflict

Economic development

Is it clearly understood which of these objectives takes priority where conflicts arise?

2. Authority and Decision Making

In circumstances where agencies disagree, including Maritime Safety Queensland, local government and environmental regulators, who has decision primacy?

Is the Authority intended to act primarily as a coordinator, or as a decision making body?



3. Operating Model

Is the Authority intended to function as a strategic policy body, or as an operational delivery authority?

Will the Authority directly deliver works such as dredging, mooring installation and maintenance, and infrastructure development, or will it commission these activities through other entities?

4. Funding Model

What is the intended core funding model for the Authority?

Government appropriation

User pays mechanisms, if appropriate or applicable

How will the funding model influence decision making and prioritisation?

5. Measures of Success

What does success look like over a ten year horizon?

How will the Authority measure performance across

Navigation efficiency and safety

Environmental outcomes

Reduction in user conflict

Economic contribution

6. Comparative Models

There are useful insights from comparable models.

Swan River Trust in Western Australia

Strong environmental stewardship model

Less emphasis on navigation and operational delivery

Gold Coast Waterways Authority in Queensland

Strong operational capability, particularly in dredging and sand management

Engineering and delivery focused model

The proposed Authority appears to sit between these models. There is a risk of inheriting the



constraints of both without fully realising the strengths of either, unless the operating model is clearly defined.

7. System Level Considerations

Waterways should be considered as integrated systems, including catchment dynamics, coastal processes, navigation and land use.

User conflict between recreational, commercial and environmental interests is likely to increase over time and will require active management.

Sediment and sand movement are foundational to system performance. If not managed proactively, other issues will become reactive.

8. Governance and Board Capability

What skills and experience are being targeted in the composition of the Board?

Will there be representation from individuals with direct experience in operating complex marine systems, including ports, pilotage, dredging and logistics?

Strong governance will require a balance of environmental, engineering, commercial and operational expertise.

Conclusion

The Bill establishes a clear set of powers for the Authority. The effectiveness of the model will ultimately depend on how these powers are exercised through the operating model, governance arrangements and funding structure.

Experience in comparable marine and infrastructure systems suggests that without clarity in these areas, there is a risk of the Authority becoming coordination heavy but delivery light.

Ensuring strong operational, commercial and system level expertise at the governance level will be critical to achieving the intended outcomes.

I would welcome the opportunity to contribute further as the model develops.