

# Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority Bill 2026

**Submission No:** 095

**Submission By:** City of Moreton Bay

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Mr Jim McDonald MP  
Chair  
State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee

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

Dear Jim,

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

This submission has been prepared by Council officers in response to the Queensland Parliament's inquiry into the *Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority Bill 2026* (the Bill), which has been referred to the State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee for detailed consideration.

The proposed Authority's functions and geographic remit extending into the City of Moreton Bay local government area has the potential to materially affect waterways, infrastructure, growth areas and assets within Moreton Bay. Notably, decisions relating to sediment and sand management, navigation and waterway infrastructure within the Pumicestone Passage and associated catchments may influence flood behaviour, dredging requirements, wastewater discharge performance, transport infrastructure and the delivery of State and Council planned growth.

Given these cross-boundary impacts and Council's statutory responsibilities for land use planning, infrastructure provision and waterway management, alongside our involvement in the catchment action planning for the Pumicestone Passage, currently being undertaken through the Resilient Rivers (SEQ) initiative, it is appropriate and necessary that City of Moreton Bay has a meaningful role in shaping the legislative framework to ensure the Bill supports coordinated, place based and practicable outcomes across affected local government areas.

This submission outlines key areas of interest in ensuring that the proposed Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority (SCWA) operates effectively, transparently and in a manner that supports coordinated infrastructure delivery and sustainable growth across affected local government areas.

### **Overall Position**

The Bill's objective of improved coordination and long-term strategic management of waterways is supported. We acknowledge that the establishment of a dedicated waterways authority has the potential to provide clearer strategic direction and greater focus on waterways management across the Sunshine Coast region, including the City of Moreton Bay.

However, it is considered that aspects of the Bill require refinement to ensure that the SCWA functions as a coordinating and enabling body, rather than introducing additional complexity or unintended consequences for local governments and other stakeholders.

A key area of interest arising from the Bill is the proposed functions relating to the monitoring and management of sand and sediment movement, which may have implications for Pumicestone Passage and adjacent waterways within the City of Moreton Bay.

### **Sediment and Hydrodynamic Management**

*Sediment decisions must be transparent, coordinated and evidence based.*

The Bill confers on the SCWA an explicit statutory function to monitor and manage sand and sediment movement in Sunshine Coast waterways, as well as in adjacent coastal waters and land. This is a critical function in supporting navigational access, environmental outcomes and long-term system resilience.

At the same time, it is noted that sediment management decisions have the potential to influence erosion and accretion patterns, dredging requirements, tidal behaviour and navigational access beyond the SCWA boundaries. Given the interconnected nature of Pumicestone Passage, decisions taken within “Sunshine Coast waterways” may have material impacts on waterways, infrastructure and assets managed by the City of Moreton Bay. Accordingly, it is essential that sediment related decisions be informed by robust, transparent hydrodynamic and sediment modelling, and that affected local governments be engaged early and meaningfully in decision making processes. Clear delineation of responsibilities is also required to avoid duplication, conflicting actions or delays in responding to emerging issues.

### **Urban Stormwater Quality and Local Government Responsibilities**

*SCWA decisions may increase stormwater quality obligations on Council.*

Local governments are responsible for the planning, delivery and operation of urban stormwater systems, including measures to manage sediment loads from developed catchments. These responsibilities are already reflected in Council’s planning schemes, infrastructure standards and water sensitive urban design requirements, which are calibrated to existing assumptions about receiving environments, tidal exchange and sediment dynamics.

Decisions made by the SWCA in relation to sediment management, dredging, channel modification or tidal behaviour may alter sediment accumulation patterns and waterway conditions downstream of urban catchments. Such changes may increase the sensitivity of receiving waters to sediment inputs from stormwater discharges, even where those discharges currently meet approved standards and performance criteria.

In this context, SCWA strategies or programs could create an expectation that additional sediment reduction be achieved at the urban stormwater source, shifting pressure onto local governments to retrofit or upgrade stormwater treatment systems. This could include increased requirements for sediment basins, constructed wetlands, gross pollutant traps or other treatment measures beyond those anticipated in existing approvals and infrastructure planning.

Any such outcome would represent a material change to local government obligations, with significant implications for capital cost, ongoing maintenance, land take, and delivery timeframes, particularly in established urban areas where retrofitting stormwater infrastructure is complex and expensive.

Accordingly, assurance is sought that the Bill and its implementation will not result in unintended cost shifting to local government through heightened stormwater treatment expectations arising from SCWA waterway management decisions. It is considered essential that responsibilities for

managing sediment at the source, within waterways, and through dredging or other interventions are clearly delineated, and that any proposal which would require additional stormwater treatment by local government be subject to early consultation, shared technical assessment and clear agreement on funding, timing and responsibility.

The following four priority matters are requested to be addressed, with subsequent recommendations outlined.

### **Priority 1 - Growth Areas and Land Use Planning**

#### *Protect growth sequencing, flood assumptions and infrastructure planning*

SCWA decisions may influence development outcomes within the broader Pumicestone Passage catchment and potentially the Caboolture River catchment, including established and emerging growth areas such as the Elimbah SEQ Development Area, Elimbah East growth area, North Harbour Priority Development Area, Waraba Priority Development Area, Morayfield South growth area, and infill development in Caboolture and Morayfield. These areas form a critical component of Council's long-term housing and employment strategy and are underpinned by carefully calibrated assumptions relating to flooding, drainage, navigation, environmental constraints and infrastructure capacity.

Changes to sediment movement, channel morphology or tidal behaviour arising from SCWA strategies or programs could alter flood risk profiles, erosion patterns or hydraulic performance within these catchments. Such changes have the potential to affect developable land yields, impose additional constraints on development, or trigger the need for unplanned upgrades to stormwater, transport and wastewater infrastructure. These impacts could, in turn, affect the timing, sequencing and cost of delivering growth in areas already subject to State and local planning commitments.

Assurance is sought that the preparation and implementation of SCWA waterways management strategies and programs will be closely aligned with local government planning schemes, growth strategies and approved development sequencing. It is essential that SCWA decisions do not inadvertently undermine planning assumptions that have already been tested through statutory planning processes, infrastructure planning and development approvals.

Accordingly, early and ongoing engagement between the SCWA, affected local governments and relevant State agencies is necessary to ensure that waterway management decisions support, rather than constrain, the orderly and efficient delivery of planned growth across the Pumicestone Passage and Caboolture River catchments.

### **Priority 2 - Critical Growth Infrastructure**

#### *Avoid impacts on wastewater performance and transport delivery*

The Bill has potential implications for critical infrastructure, including the Unitywater owned Caboolture South and Burpengary Wastewater Treatment Plants, existing and potential future outfall infrastructure, and the proposed second bridge to Bribie Island. These assets are fundamental to accommodating planned growth within the Pumicestone Passage catchment and rely on stable assumptions regarding sediment movement, tidal behaviour, navigational access and coastal processes.

Changes to sediment regimes, channel morphology or tidal exchange arising from SCWA decisions may have flow on consequences for wastewater discharge performance, regulatory approvals, design standards and long-term operational capacity. Uncoordinated sediment or navigation interventions could affect the receiving environment for treated wastewater discharges, with potential implications for compliance, augmentation timing and ultimately, growth capacity across the sewer catchment.

Similarly, sediment management and navigation decisions may influence the design, construction methodology and maintenance requirements for major transport infrastructure, including the proposed second Bribie Island bridge. SCWA actions should not introduce additional risk, cost or delay to the delivery of State significant infrastructure through changes to hydrodynamic conditions, navigational constraints or dredging requirements that were not anticipated in State Government project planning.

Accordingly, early, structured consultation and alignment between the SCWA, Department of Transport and Main Roads, Unitywater and the City of Moreton Bay is critical. SCWA strategies and programs should explicitly recognise and accommodate approved and planned wastewater, transport infrastructure, and include mechanisms to ensure that waterway management decisions support the timely, cost-effective delivery of essential infrastructure needed to service planned growth.

### **Priority 3 - Existing Dredging Operations**

#### *Safeguard existing dredging programs and approvals*

The City of Moreton Bay currently undertakes established dredging operations at Bribie Gardens, Pacific Harbour and Newport, which are integral to maintaining safe navigational access, functional waterways and the ongoing usability of Council managed marine and canal systems. These dredging activities support recreational and commercial boating, protect adjacent assets and development, and form part of Council's longer operational response to naturally dynamic sediment processes within the Pumicestone Passage system.

These dredging programs are underpinned by existing approvals, operational plans and funding commitments, and are closely linked to broader infrastructure, environmental management and growth outcomes. Any changes to sediment dynamics, navigational priorities or waterway management approaches arising from SCWA strategies or programs therefore have the potential to affect the effectiveness, cost and timing of Council's dredging activities, as well as the assumptions on which they are currently planned and delivered.

Assurance is sought that SCWA actions will recognise and protect existing dredging programs and approvals, and that the establishment of the SCWA will not result in duplication, conflicting directions or unanticipated changes to established dredging regimes. Where changes are proposed that may affect Council's dredging operations, it is essential that these be subject to early consultation, transparent justification and agreed transition arrangements, including clear consideration of cost, timing, operational impacts and responsibility for any additional works or mitigation required.

Such an approach is necessary to provide certainty for ongoing waterway maintenance, minimise disruption to waterway users and ensure that existing investments in dredging operations continue to deliver their intended outcomes.

## Priority 4 - Local Government Representation on the Board

### *Board level local government voice is essential*

The Gold Coast Waterways Authority (GCWA) provides a useful reference point for statutory waterway governance in Queensland, however there are important differences between the GCWA and the proposed Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority.

The GCWA operates within a single local government area, and its functions are primarily focused on maintaining navigational access, delivering boating infrastructure and undertaking dredging largely in support of navigation. By contrast, the SCWA is proposed to have a broader statutory remit, including an explicit function to monitor and manage sand and sediment movement with potential systemwide and cross-boundary effects, and its geographic scope spans multiple local government areas.

However, governance arrangements which have proven workable for the GCWA in a single council context are not directly transferable to the Sunshine Coast context. The broader functional scope and multi-council geography of the SCWA warrant additional governance safeguards to ensure effective coordination and alignment with local government responsibilities.

The Bill proposed to establish a seven-member board appointed on a skills-based basis but does not provide for guaranteed local government representation, despite the Sunshine Coast waterways intersecting the local government areas of City of Moreton Bay, Noosa Shire Council and Sunshine Coast Regional Council.

The absence of formal local government representation on the Board is a key governance and delivery risk. While consultation requirements are included in the Bill, consultation alone does not provide the same level of influence, accountability or early risk identification as Board level participation, particularly where decisions may affect council owned assets, infrastructure and growth planning.

It is recommended that the Bill be amended to provide for formal local government representation on the Board, or alternatively to require a designated board position with demonstrated senior local government experience.

### **Recommendations**

That the Committee support the Bill subject to the following refinements that address cross-boundary sediment and navigation impacts.

1. Require SCWA strategies and programs to explicitly identify and exclude any additional urban stormwater sediment treatment obligations for local governments unless agreed and appropriately funded.
2. Require explicit consideration of growth areas, Priority Development Areas and critical infrastructure in SCWA strategies and programs.
3. Ensure existing Council dredging programs are recognised and protected.
4. Strengthen consultation and coordination requirements with affected local governments.
5. Amend the Bill to provide for formal local government representation on the SCWA Board.

## Conclusion

The intent of improved waterway management through the establishment of the Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority is supported. However, given the expanded scope of the Authority's functions and the interconnected nature of Pumicestone Passage; additional governance safeguards, particularly Board level local government representation, are essential to avoid unintended impacts on growth, infrastructure delivery and existing Council operations.

Council welcomes the opportunity to further discuss this submission with the Committee, to ensure the Bill delivers effective outcomes for all key stakeholders.

For any questions relating to this submission please contact Christopher Aston, Executive General Manager, City Futures via mobile at [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] or by email at [REDACTED]

Yours faithfully,



Scott Waters  
**Chief Executive Officer**

cc: Christopher Aston, Executive General Manager, City Futures