



# White Paper – Waterway & Foreshore Management in Qld

**ISSUE:** Waterway & Foreshore Management in Qld

**SUBJECT:** A boating industry WHITE PAPER to brief the State Government on the issue

Prepared for the Queensland Government  
Submitted by the Boating Industry Association Ltd.

**Date:** 24 August 2025

## **Background: The Boating Industry's Stake in Queensland's Waterways**

The Boating Industry Association Ltd (BIA) is the peak industry body in Australia, representing the diverse interests of the nation's boating sector. Our members span the entire marine value chain, from designers and manufacturers to marinas, retailers, and service providers. With a reported national turnover of over \$10.2 billion and a workforce of approximately 35,000 people across 2,000 businesses, BIA is a key contributor to the national economy. In Queensland, the industry's significant footprint is underscored by a \$3.93 billion turnover, 14,600 employees, and a boating population exceeding one million license holders.

The BIA is an unwavering advocate for safe, responsible and enjoyable boating. Our close collaboration with the Australian Fishing Trade Association underlines the economic and social significance of water-based recreation in Australia, collectively representing an annual industry turnover of \$21 billion and employing 135,000 people. With almost 1 in 5 Australian households owning a boat or watercraft, and approximately 5 million people participating in boating annually, the health and effective management of our waterways are paramount.<sup>ii</sup>

The recent proposal to establish a Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority, emerging prior to the 2024 Queensland Election, has prompted the BIA to present this White Paper. While we were not consulted on the proposal, our deep industry expertise and commitment to effective governance compel us to offer a considered perspective on the management of Queensland's State Waters, which are used by millions of people to go boating in all types of vessels and watercraft. Many local and visiting vessels navigate on our 'Blue Highways' enabling a considerable number of people to each year enjoy travelling along our waterways and coastlines to destinations that traverse multiple LGA, State and occasionally international borders.

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## **2. Executive Summary: A Coordinated Statewide Approach to Waterway Management**

The Boating Industry Association acknowledges and supports the Queensland Government's commitment to effective and sustainable management of State Waters, which are used for boating in all types of vessels and watercraft. Our perspective, however, is that the proposed Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority would introduce unnecessary duplication, confusion, red tape and costs, ultimately hindering, rather than helping, the effective management of our waterways or foreshores.

The BIA recognizes the pressing need to address specific issues within State Waters, such as the Bribie Island breakthrough. However, we submit that this is a coastal foreshore management issue, distinct from the broader management of activities on the waterways. Conflating these responsibilities under a new authority would fragment the clear, statewide on-water responsibilities currently held by Maritime Safety Queensland (MSQ).

BIA's position is that the most efficient and beneficial outcome for both the marine industry and the public is to reinforce, not fragment, existing governmental responsibilities. MSQ has demonstrated significant progress in recent years in its role as the State's primary maritime authority, responsible for vessel safety, safe navigation, and regulatory enforcement of activities on State Waters. One example is the work currently underway by MSQ to deliver a waterway management plan for Noosa, where their waterway management plan is being deployed with positive affect over a staged introduction. We believe the focus should be on enhancing this statewide framework, rather than creating fragmented, regional authorities.

To this end, we propose a clear delineation of responsibilities: one 'waterways' manager for the State (MSQ) and one 'foreshore' manager. This separation, we believe, is the key to minimizing government duplication, confusion, costs and ensuring an efficient, responsive approach to the diverse challenges facing Queensland's coastal assets.

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## **3. The Case Against a Fragmented Approach: Duplication, Confusion, Costs and Red Tape**

The BIA respectfully submits that establishing a Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority would lead to a number of undesirable outcomes:

- **Duplication of Services:** A new authority would inevitably overlap with MSQ's existing responsibilities for navigation, safety and vessel management.

- This would create parallel systems for regulation, compliance and infrastructure, leading to inefficient use of taxpayer funds and operational redundancies.
  - Functional Area Inefficiencies: The potential for bureaucratic confusion or duplication when it comes to incident or disaster response and management such as extreme weather, cyclones, fire and flood. BIA is aware State and National Disaster Response Plans require clear lines of functional area responsibility for such reasons.
  - Confusion for Waterway Users: Boaters, fishers, commercial vessel operators and other recreational users operate across different regions. A patchwork of regional authorities, each with its own management plans, would create an unnecessarily complex and confusing regulatory environment. For example, a boater traveling on the Blue Highway along our coast from the Gold Coast to the Sunshine Coast, would have to navigate different sets of rules for three different government agencies on their voyage. International visiting vessels could also confront local variations to what are the long-standing international maritime conventions for safety of vessels which are the International Rules for Preventing Collisions at Sea – which are foundation for MSQ approach to boating safety on State Waters.
  - Increased Red Tape: The introduction of a new authority would add an extra layer of bureaucracy for businesses and the public. Licensing, infrastructure approvals, and other administrative processes would become more complex, slowing down economic activity and hindering the very industries the government aims to support.
  - Increased costs: With multiple agencies delivering services for the same purposes and functional areas, there will inevitably be increased costs to Government and taxpayers.
  - Fractured Management of Statewide Issues: Challenges such as dredging, erosion, infrastructure and foreshore management, maritime incident/ disaster response and safe navigation for all vessels from ships to recreational craft are not confined to a single region. The Bribie Island breakthrough, for instance, has far-reaching implications. Addressing such issues through a regional lens prevents the development of a coherent, long-term, statewide strategy.
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#### **4. A Framework for a Coordinated and Efficient Solution**

The BIA believes a better path forward lies in building upon the demonstrated strengths of existing agencies and creating a clear, statewide framework for waterway and foreshore management.

Our submission is based on the following principles:

1. Reinforce MSQ's Core Mission: MSQ should retain and be fully supported in its

legislated role as the primary authority for on-water navigation and safety for all types of vessels and watercraft, safe navigation including aids to navigation, and vessel management across all of Queensland's State Waters. This includes managing ports, declared Boat Harbours, commercial and recreational vessels, water traffic rules, marine incident emergency response and leading statewide initiatives like the "War on Wrecks."

2. **Establish a statewide Foreshore Management Authority:** The BIA proposes the establishment of a dedicated Foreshore Management Authority. This entity would not be a new, separate layer of bureaucracy, but a strategic evolution of an already successful model. We recommend expanding and renaming the Gold Coast Waterways Authority (GCWA), an entity that has demonstrated success in managing foreshore infrastructure, maintenance, and dredging within its jurisdiction.
3. **Delineate Clear Responsibilities:** The Foreshore Management Authority's mandate would be clearly defined to manage the land-water interface. This would include responsibility for foreshore infrastructure (e.g., seawalls, groynes), maintenance dredging, and place management in high-priority coastal foreshore areas. This model ensures that MSQ focuses on the safe use of the water, while the Queensland Foreshore Management Authority focuses on the physical health and integrity of the foreshore and its related infrastructure and the corresponding management.

This two-pronged approach—one manager for the water, one manager for the land-water interface—eliminates duplication and provides clarity for the public and industry alike. Issues such as the Bribie Island breakthrough, which are primarily related to coastal foreshore processes and place management, would be handled by the specialised Queensland Foreshore Management Authority, while on-water safety spanning shipping, commercial and recreational vessels, navigation aids, marine pollution and maritime incident response at locations like Bribie Island, Noosa and Mooloolaba would remain firmly within MSQ's remit.

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## **Conclusion: A Commitment to Sustainable and Efficient Governance**

The Boating Industry Association is committed to working collaboratively with the Queensland Government to ensure the sustainable management of our waterways. We believe that the Bribie Island breakthrough, while a significant challenge, presents an opportunity to implement a forward-thinking, statewide governance model.

The proposed creation of a Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority would introduce fragmentation and bureaucracy at a time when a coordinated, statewide approach is most needed.

The BIA stands ready to work with the government to develop and implement the proposed Queensland (Sunshine Coast) Foreshore Management Authority model, ensuring a clear, efficient and effective framework for addressing both current and future coastal management challenges.

Please do not hesitate to contact Mr Neil Patchett, General Manager Government & Public Relations, e. [neil@bia.org.au](mailto:neil@bia.org.au) or m. 0418 279 465 on this matter.

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<sup>i</sup> Additional information is available from the [BIA website](#)

<sup>ii</sup> Additional boating data is available from the [National Recreational Boating Statement \(2025\)](#)