

5.1 MARITIME SAFETY QUEENSLAND RECREATIONAL BOATING FACILITIES DEMAND FORECAST STUDY 2022

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report provides an overview of the “Recreational Boating Facilities Demand Forecasting Study dated 13 March 2022 (the Study) recently commissioned by Maritime Safety Queensland (MSQ), a branch of the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR). The Study identifies latent demand for boat launching facilities on the Noosa River, and recommends a number of priority projects.

Whilst the Study is timely due to increasing demand, a number of concerns are raised in regard to the lack of a regional approach, lack of consideration of contemporary parking and river demand management to increase capacity, as well as concerns for the funding model.

The Study identifies seven priority projects, and detailed assessment and recommendations are included in the report. Six of the projects have merit for further consideration and / or require redesign to achieve quality outcomes for the Noosa River foreshore. It is recommended that one priority project (Chaplin Park Boat Ramp) be rejected outright due to inconsistency with the Noosaville Foreshore Land Use Master Plan, impacts on the parkland and community expectations.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council note the report by the Principal Environment Officer and the Infrastructure Planning Co-ordinator to the Services and Organisation Committee Meeting dated 6 June 2023 and:

- A. Note its appreciation for MSQ / DTMR in commissioning the investigation to respond to increasing demand for recreational boating facilities
- B. Raise concerns for the lack of a regional approach to planning for boat launching facilities, particularly when the Noosa River system is a relatively small system compared to other regional water bodies and may not have the capacity to accommodate statistical growth
- C. Seek discussions about increased funding from MSQ / DTMR to fund on-shore components of the boat ramp facilities
- D. Welcome further discussions between MSQ and Council to support expedient placement of the Noosa Woods Pontoon, Gympie Terrace Noosaville Pontoon and Lake Street Tewantin Pontoon to assist in improving boating access to the Noosa River
- E. Welcome initiation of planning processes jointly with MSQ and TMR to upgrade facilities at Albert / Thomas Steet (Noosaville) Boat Ramp, Hilton Esplanade (Tewantin) Boat Ramp, Lake Street (Tewantin) Boat Ramp and Moorindil Street (Tewantin) Boat Ramp but raise

concerns for the unrealistic increase in car and trailer carparking capacity indicated in the Noosa Recreational Boating Facilities Demand Forecasting Study due to traffic, landscape and environmental impact

- F. Reject the proposed facility at Chaplin Park due to planning, tenure and character impacts on the park
- G. Note that Council is proposing to initiate a Parking Study in FY23/24 that will include examination of car and trailer parking at and near to boat ramps to examine additional measures to manage capacity through contemporary parking demand management techniques, and that the outcomes of this study should inform any consideration of future boat ramps.

REPORT

1. Introduction

The purpose of the report is to provide a technical review of the “Recreational Boating Facilities Demand Forecasting Study 2022 - Noosa Shire Assessment” (the Study) undertaken by consultants BMT on behalf of MSQ, a branch of the TMR.

The Study examines recreational boating facility demand, capacity, and shortfall over a 20-year period for local governments across Queensland. The Study is intended for use by Managers and key stakeholders of public recreational boating facilities across Queensland. The Study is non-regulatory in nature and is intended to be used as part of a broader suite of information to identify priority investment in recreational boating infrastructure at a local and state level.

The Study examines local demand for recreational boating facilities, identifies shortfall in facilities to meet demand, and identifies upgrade opportunities to numerous sites along the Noosa River.

Consultation undertaken by the consultants as part of the Study identified the following key issues:

- very low overall satisfaction of recreational boating demand for boat launching facilities
- the highest per-capita registration of small (less than 4.5m in length) vessels in south-east Queensland, and the second highest per-capita registration of trailable (less than 8m in length) vessels in south-east Queensland
- very high conflict with competing uses for available land along the Noosa River foreshore
- strong disagreement between various stakeholders on the appropriateness of competing uses of the Noosa River and the surrounding foreshore land.

The Study is included as **Attachment 1**. This report seeks to summarise key information contained in the Study, and recommend a Council position which will be provided as formal feedback to MSQ and TMR.

2. Demand for Boat Launching Facilities

The Study undertakes an assessment of recreational boating demand centred on a statistical demand model that considers vessel registration data, population statistics, assumptions around local usage, availability of private berths in canals and the movement of vessels into and out of the LGA. In summary the report assumes that 4,688 “trailable” vessels in the local government area have demand for local boat ramps.

The Study notes that currently Noosa provides 12 boat ramp lanes with a total effective boat launching capacity of 5.8 “effective” lanes taking into account landside capacity issues (such as lack of trailer parking). Further, it notes that to meet demand the existing provision of

5.8 is less than half of existing demand of 13 effective boat launching capacity, and demand will increase to 15 by 2041, consistent with population and boating growth.

Independent boat counts on the Noosa River undertaken by Council in 2006 and 2021 indicates growth of boats in the Noosa River of 1.3% per year in the period 2006 to 2021 and 20% overall. This is consistent with the increase in boats in Queensland with a 10-year average of 1.4 percent¹. This same report indicates that boat registrations in Queensland rose 2.9 percent in 2021, well above long-term average and forecasts even more demand for boating access.

The proposition that Noosa needs to consider increasing demand for boating access to the Noosa River consistent with population growth and increase in boat ownership is appropriate, however this also needs to be considered in the context of capacity of the river and the capacity for car and trailer parks. The MSQ / TMR commissioned study is timely in this regard to initiate new planning and responses.

¹<https://www.marinebusinessnews.com.au/2022/11/queenslands-boat-registrations-grow-almost-four-times-faster-than-population-during-the-pandemic/#:~:text=The%20report%20also%20reveals%20that,the%20pace%20for%20boat%20ownership.>

3. Demand for Deep- Draft Vessel Landings

The assessment notes that Noosa Shire has no usable public deep-draught vessel landings, with existing public jetties along the Noosaville foreshore unsuitable for this purpose. The assessment notes that an additional 1.3 facilities are required to meet demand.

Whilst the shallowness of the Noosa River system and its bar are well known as providing limitations for deep draft vessels, the review proposes an additional 2 facilities which provide on-shore benefits for all vessels. Currently, fixed height jetties in these locations hinder use at different tidal levels, whereas a floating pontoon will be more accessible for all vessels.

4. Capacity of the Noosa River to Absorb Boating Growth

As outlined above, the Study uses statistics to determine demand and assumes that growth is unrestrained and will equally receive boating demand in the LGA in equal proportions to other water bodies.

The Study does not provide any assessment of the capacity or ability for the Noosa River to absorb growth, which is a flaw in the methodology. The Study does not consider a regional approach to vessel management and growth. In the same manner that large sporting or entertainment events are scheduled at regional sport stadiums or facilities to accommodate audiences, it might be more desirable to promote regional water bodies that have better capacity to absorb regional growth. In this regard the Noosa River is a relatively small area for recreational boating in the region, with significant lake areas of shallow water further constraining effective use:

| Water Body | Area |
|---|----------------------------|
| Noosa River Area | Approx 50km ² |
| Great Sandy Strait | Approx 700km ² |
| Moreton Bay (including Pumicestone Passage) | Approx 1500km ² |
| Hervey Bay | Approx 350m ² |

As the Study was undertaken simultaneously across Queensland, the lack of consideration of regional waterway capacity to manage and distribute growth is considered a significant missed opportunity. This omission of the Study has been raised in the recommendations of this report.

5. Contemporary Parking Demand Management

The Study largely promotes the optimal way to increase the capacity of the existing launch facilities is to increase car and trailer parking capacity, requiring occupation of valuable foreshore land and costly infrastructure. The Study does not provide any assessment or recommendations for demand management in the parking areas, as a mechanism to improve capacity, and this is considered an omission. Contemporary demand management in popular destinations would see a mix of timed, paid and free parking deployed across an area to drive car parking and transport behavior to make optimal use of existing facilities, often by increasing turnover at popular locations. An example can be seen in use at Airlie Beach in the Whitsundays "Parking Made Easy Program" available at <https://www.whitsundayrc.qld.gov.au/downloads/file/866/airlie-beach-parking-map>. This program is supported by an app for users.

As an example, car and trailer parking at Noosa River boat ramps is not time-limited, and a car and trailer occupying a space for a week, prevents that space being used for possible multiple daily use by other users. Contemporary demand management might implement a program of time limits on car and trailer parking, and seek long-term users to return their vehicle and trailer to other parking areas as a courtesy to free up ramp site parking for short-term users. These programs can be supported by satellite parking areas removed from the actual boat ramp.

This example has not been tested or studied in Noosa, but is a fundamental consideration in contemporary parking management to maximise use of limited foreshore space.

Noosa Council has proposed a parking study in the 2023/2024 financial year to examine better demand management, and the recommendation of this report is for the brief to consider parking demand and time limits at Noosa River boat ramps as a mechanism to increase capacity and turnover and that this study informs any future boat ramp location considerations.

6. Funding Model

The Study proposed various projects, most of which are improvements to onshore parking facilities to increase capacity. The Study does not include provisions relating to funding proposed facilities.

Under longstanding arrangements, TMR only fund and build the in-water components of a facility and seek councils and other port/water authorities to fund and provide the land-based components, and then manage the whole facility when completed. Discussions with TMR representatives indicate no change from that position and they would be seeking Noosa Council to fund the on-shore components of all projects, with TMR funding limited to over-water pontoons and boat ramps.

Upgrades to on-shore boat ramp facilities are currently not included in Council's forward planning capital works program, and would need new and additional budget allocation.

Considering that recreational boating is a state government jurisdiction, and Council have limited jurisdiction for on-river management, this funding model is not considered balanced, and TMR should release funding for on-shore facilities. A recommendation has been drafted in this respect.

7. Priority Projects

The Study identifies 7 priority projects being:

1. Albert Street / Thomas Street Noosaville Boat Ramp Upgrade
2. Lake Street Tewantin Boat Ramp Upgrade

3. Hilton Esplanade Boat Ramp Upgrade
4. Noosa Woods New Pontoon
5. Moorindil Street Boat Ramp Upgrade
6. Chaplin Street Boat Ramp
7. Noosaville Pontoon.

A technical assessment of the projects is included as **Attachment 2**.

The proposed pontoons at Noosa Woods, Gympie Terrace Noosaville and adjacent to the existing boat ramp at Lake Street Tewartin are considered to have particular appeal to expediently improve boating access to the Noosa River.

Other projects also have merit for further consideration and / or require redesign to achieve quality outcomes for the Noosa River foreshore. A common theme in the designs prepared by BMT is the unrealistic proposed increase in car and trailer car parking capacity report due to traffic, landscape and environmental impacts.

The proposed new boat ramp at Chaplin Park is recommended to be rejected outright due to inconsistency with the Noosaville Foreshore Land Use Master Plan, impacts on the parkland and community expectations.

Recommended actions are outlined in the table below.

| Item | Immediate Action | Medium Term Action | Rejected |
|--|--|---|---|
| Albert Street / Thomas Street Noosaville Boat Ramp Upgrade | Redesign of the facility is supported but with better design considerations including traffic, character and precinct planning. Design can be considered as part of <i>Noosaville Foreshore Infrastructure Master Plan</i> (established program going to tender May 2023) | - | Design layout as shown in BMT Report is unsuitable. |
| Lake Street Tewartin Boat Ramp Upgrade | Installation of pontoon adjacent to existing Boat Ramp is supported to improve functionality | Redesign of the facility is supported but with better design considerations including traffic and character Design can be considered as part of <i>Tewartin Foreshore Master Plan</i> proposed for FY 24/25. | Design layout as shown in BMT Report is unsuitable. |
| Hilton Esplanade Boat Ramp Upgrade | - | Redesign of the facility is supported but with better design considerations including traffic, character, | Design Layout as shown in BMT Report is unsuitable. |

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|------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| | | <p>impacts on Lake Doonella and Noosa River and Noosa arrival experience</p> <p>Proposed as design project for FY 24/25</p> | |
| Noosa Woods New Pontoon | Installation of a pontoon in Noosa Woods is supported | <p>Design and location/s can be further considered as part of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Noosa Heads Open Space Master Plan</i> to consider land side planning for FY 24/25 • <i>The Woods Jetty Ferry Investigations in 23/24</i> | - |
| Moorindil Street Boat Ramp Upgrade | - | <p>Redesign of facility is supported but with better design considerations, especially consideration of ferry traffic and North Shore arrival experience</p> <p>To be considered as design project for FY 24/25</p> | Design Layout as shown in BMT Report is unsuitable. |
| Chaplin Street Boat Ramp | - | - | <p>No support for the facility due to impacts on foreshore. Inconsistent with Foreshore Land Use Master Plan (endorsed under the Land Act). Native title considerations are also pertinent. Community expectations have been set for this space with previous planning.</p> |
| Noosaville Pontoon | <p>Replace existing Jetty with Pontoon to allow better river access is supported.</p> <p>Improvements to onshore facilities can also be considered as part of <i>Noosaville Foreshore Infrastructure Foreshore Master Plan</i> as outlined above</p> | - | - |

Focus areas include the natural environment, built environment, waterways and coasts and conservation and heritage.

Objective 1.6

Partner with community to improve the health and water quality management of Noosa and Mary Rivers and coastal areas through whole of catchment management to protect environmental values while enabling sustainable public access, recreation, and commercial use

Previous Council Consideration**Ordinary Meeting 19 January 2023, Item 1, Page 3.**

That Council request a report be provided to Council by Council's Infrastructure Department to the May round of Council Meetings in relation to the findings of the Maritime Safety Qld Recreational Boating Facilities Demand Forecasting Study 2022, due for release in March 2023 by the State Government of Queensland, pertaining to the Noosa Local Government Area and that the Council report also has regard to community concerns about loss of public space and increased traffic on the Noosa River.

Finance

On-shire infrastructure for boat launching facilities is not currently included in the forward capital works program for Noosa. Pursuing planning and design processes will raise community expectations for future funding and impacts on overall Council budget.

Seeking alternative funding (such as from MSQ TMR) as outlined in the recommendations is a prudent task.

Risk & Opportunities

The key risk is lack of planning to manage demand in boat launching facilities in the Noosa River leading to continue community dissatisfaction, and pressure and conflicts at existing facilities, this however needs to be balanced with consideration of the capacity of the River and surrounding infrastructure including car and boat trailer carparking.

The key opportunity is to work with MSQ / TMR to capitalise on the findings of the Study to commence planning processes, as well as seek additional funding streams.

Consultation**External Consultation - Community & Stakeholder**

BMT references extensive user surveys and stakeholder investigations in preparation of their Study. Noosa Council, nor its officers were not involved in this consultation.

Any ongoing planning and investment in recreational boating facilities along the river will require community consultation.

Internal Consultation

