



17th July 2025

Our Waterways Future Project Team
Gold Coast Waterways Authority
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Dear Project Team,

Submission regarding the draft Our Waterways Future strategic framework

We appreciate the opportunity to make a submission **regarding the draft Our Waterways Future strategic framework (“the draft Framework”) that was released by Gold Coast Waterways Authority in June 2025.**

Outdoors Queensland is the peak body for the outdoor sector in Queensland. We represent outdoor organisations and individuals in Queensland, consisting of a range of outdoor industry stakeholders, covering the five broad pillars of outdoor activities:

- outdoor recreation,
- outdoor education,
- outdoor health,
- nature-based tourism, and
- associated support services.

The mission of Outdoors Queensland is to ensure that all people have opportunities to create connections with Queensland’s outdoors. Our vision is to create a world where the outdoors is a vital part of every healthy life - a healthy world comes from a balanced life, incorporating outdoor activities for all people.

Outdoors Queensland serves as the industry peak body for the outdoor sector, with a focus on building capacity and capability of outdoor people and outdoor organisations to help all people make connections with Queensland’s outdoors.

We appreciate being consulted in the preparation of the draft Framework, and are pleased to provide feedback at this stage. We acknowledge the public consultation process that has been conducted as a key part of this project.

The fact that there were over 1,800 responses to the online survey is an indicator of the importance of the Gold Coast’s waterways to the public. We note that the aim stated on page iii of the draft Framework is “to safeguard the waterways as vibrant recreational and economic assets, preserving their vital role in the Gold Coast’s lifestyle, identity and reputation.”



Outdoors Queensland supports the approach that has been taken in the development of the draft Framework, including the three core themes of access, connection and destinations. We support the four Key Outcomes set out on page 11 of the draft Framework:

1. Improved access and connection
2. Strengthened economy
3. Enhanced destinations and use management
4. Nurtured environment

We note the key themes set out on page 12 of the draft Framework, identifying the community's values and aspirations for the future of the Gold Coast waterways:

- Better access to our waterways
- Clean, natural waterways
- Recreation on-water and on-land
- Management and regulation

These key themes expressed in the consultation appear to have been well addressed throughout the draft Framework.

Under "Better access to our waterways", we suggest that it is important to consider access for outdoor education and nature-based health activities, alongside access for recreation and tourism.

"Clean, natural waterways" should be a given, but it requires commitment from all stakeholders, including GCWA and community.

Under "Recreation on-water and on-land", we strongly support planning for the foreshores in addition to what happens on the waterways. We suggest that public transport linkages should be considered to reduce reliance on motor vehicle parking, and to avoid further construction of car-parks on waterfront land that could be better used as community-parks.

Under "Management and regulation", we suggest that compliance with the Australian Adventure Activity Standard and associated Good Practice Guidesⁱ could be considered as a condition of commercial permits issued by GCWA to providers of outdoor activities.

Outdoors Queensland strongly supports the development of Local Waterway Plans - tailored plans for the varied waterway attributes and characteristics across the network should allow GCWA to better manage these waterways.

Outdoors Queensland strongly supports the Transformative BIG Ideas set out in the draft Framework:

1. We believe that the Boat Mooring, Storage and Access Strategy should be a high priority deliverable.
2. Investing in Wave Break Island as a destination for community and visitors is a must-do action.
3. We strongly support the creation of Waterway Trails and Community Hubs, and suggest that consideration should be given to options for



- commercial hire opportunities at some locations to increase access for visitors and locals who may not have their own equipment.
4. Incorporating Next Generation Waterways Transport into Local Waterway Plans makes sense, and is supported by Outdoors Queensland.
 5. Although we do not have full details on the Northern Marine Precinct at Steiglitz, we support this idea in principle as it will support the Gold Coast marine economy.
 6. State of the Waterways Reporting is critical to ensuring that the waterways are managed responsibly.

Alignment with other strategies

There are three key strategies that we believe must be considered by GCWA in implementing Our Waterways Future - City of Gold Coast Our Natural City Strategy, Queensland Government *Destination 2045*, and Queensland Government *Activate! Queensland/new Sport Strategy*.

To maximise chances of success, we suggest that Our Waterways Future must align with City of Gold Coast Our Natural City Strategy. The following text on the Our Natural City webpageⁱⁱ specifically references “endless waterways”:

The Gold Coast is globally renowned for its stunning natural environment, connection to nature and an outdoor lifestyle envied the world over.

From the lush hinterland to endless waterways, golden beaches and stunning habitat, the Gold Coast truly is a place of natural beauty. And it's up to all of us, to play our part in protecting Our Natural City.

We suggest GCWA should seek to partner with City of Gold Coast in the implementation of Our Waterways Future.

Destination 2045, which was released in June 2025, is a 20-year plan for Queensland tourism.

*Destination 2045: Delivering Queensland's Tourism Future*ⁱⁱⁱ states that:
“Queensland aspires to be the world’s leading ecotourism destinations, leveraging its incredible biodiversity and natural environments that already attract visitors from across the globe. Ecotourism is a key competitive advantage for the state, offering significant potential to create future jobs, support local communities, and unlock new opportunities for operators.”

It is important that any decisions regarding Gold Coast waterways should consider potential risks and benefits for tourism operators and economy, as well as impacts on local communities.

Given the important role that Gold Coast waterways play in recreation and sport, we suggest that Our Waterways Future should be aligned with the Queensland Government’s Activate! Queensland strategy and Queensland’s new Sport Strategy^{iv}, due for release before the end of 2025.



We understand that all or part of this submission may be published by Gold Coast Waterways Authority as part of the consultation process. If you have any queries, please contact Executive Officer, Dom Courtney, on 0419 976 800 or eo@outdoorsqueensland.com.au.

Yours sincerely,



Dom Courtney
Executive Officer / Company Secretary

i <https://australianaas.org.au/>

ii <https://www.goldcoast.qld.gov.au/Council/Future-plans-budget/Plans-policies-strategies/Our-strategies/Our-Natural-City-Strategy>

iii <https://destination2045.detsi.qld.gov.au/20-year-tourism-plan>

iv <https://www.sport.qld.gov.au/sport/sport-strategy>

