



Submission:

Noosa waterways management

ISSUE: Noosa River

SUBJECT: A response to the call for comment on a proposed management plan for the river

INTRODUCTION:

The Boating Industry Association Ltd (BIA) is the peak industry body in Australia that represents the interests of boating which includes designers, manufacturers, importers, brokers, insurers, retailers, charters, yacht and boat clubs, marinas, events, surveyors and trades from boat builders to riggers, and more. BIA is an advocate for boaters and the boating lifestyle and supports safe, responsible, and enjoyable boating.

The boating economy generates significant benefits through employment. Last year (2021) the industry reported national turnover of \$9.55 billion, directly employed more than 26,000 people with more than 8000 contractors. Seventy-five per cent are in small family businesses, employing local workers and supporting local communities.

With more than 85 per cent of the population living within 50km of the coast, it is little wonder that almost 1 in 5 households can have a boat or watercraft. People of all ages, gender and ability can participate in boating across paddle, sail and power for leisure and sport.

Boating is also a significant contributor to the economy that spans metropolitan, rural and regional Australia.

This submission was drafted by BIA GM Neil Patchett who resides in (postcode 4571) and works from the Noosa LGA, and regularly goes boating (paddle, power and sail), swimming and surfing in and on the waterways of Noosa. This began in 1968 with sailing on Lake Cootharaba, through to now with sailboat racing and cruising on the lake and/ or river, paddling on the everglade, estuary and surf, and swimming and surfing the beaches and points of Noosa, with some snorkeling thrown in when the swells are low.

SUBMISSION:

We commend MSQ for the opportunity to provide a submission on this important subject. The following is a response to the questions from the discussion paper:

Anchoring zones

MSQ is proposing several different anchoring zones to manage congestion for the Noosa River and the equity of access and safety issues that arise as a result (refer to all zones on [Map A\(PDF\)](#)).



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Note: Existing restrictions for the Noosa River and surrounding waterways under the Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Regulation 2016 and the Transport Infrastructure (Waterways Management) Regulation 2012 will remain in place.

MSQ proposes to restrict anchoring on the Noosa River and certain surrounding waterways to 28 consecutive days in a financial year (refer to the blue striped area on [Map B \(PDF\)](#) for the following question). It is intended that a vessel arrives on its day 1 and has 27 days following to come or go in the area, much the same as a camping ground or car park. The vessel does not have to stay within the area for 28 days but relinquishes any unused days on day 28 and must leave the river system. For example, a vessel can arrive on 1 July and leave on 5 July, return on 10 July and stay until 28 July. The vessel has used its 28 consecutive days period and may not return until the following financial year:

Refer to Map B for the following question:

Q. Do you consider the 28 consecutive days anchoring time limit in a financial year to be an effective way to manage congestion on the Noosa River and surrounding waterways?*

Answer (A): We are supportive of the proposal to set a 28 consecutive day time limit; however, this should be applied as follows:

- to one area and not the entire waterway to enable people visiting or holidaying to legitimately 'discover' the waterway;
- limit the requirement so that it applies only to vessels 7.5m or more in length to ensure the typical family runabout or family trailerable yacht is not captured by this rule and allows a family style trailerable, and hire boats, to anchor in the waterway for typical day and occasional overnight purposes, multiple times throughout the year;
- timed to be 12 months from the initial date of anchoring;
- ensure a vessel is Fit for Purpose to be Anchored in the Waterway ie., create a definition such as ensure the vessel put on the mooring fits a definition that could be titled: Fit for the Purposes of Securing at Anchor – in the Noosa waterways. The definition should be written to include the following:
 - Registered in NSW and or
- Capable of immediate safe independent voyage of at least 2 nautical miles as designed and intended under its own primary propulsion system whether that be

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by engine, sail or a combination of both).ensure vessels do not discharge human sewage and or waste into Noosa waterways; and

- provision of dinghy storage racks in appropriate places along the shore are to facilitate larger boat owners to motor, row or paddle ashore and secure their tender safety and conveniently in a way to keep the beach clear for public amenity.

Q: How do you think this change would impact on you, the waterway and other waterway users?

A: We support the proposal to limit the time for anchoring to 28 consecutive days in a year. We would add however that the operator of a vessel must not allow a vessel to be at anchor in State waters for more than 90 days in any 12-month period from the first day of anchoring. This approach is similar with other significant boating jurisdictions in Australia eg., NSW and recognises the long-standing maritime convention to enable mariners to visit a waterway for rest, recovery and repair, as well as exploration. This ensures the waterway remains open to the greater good as opposed to a limited few.

We are also supportive of this proposal because leaving it as it is would be a failure to future generations of people who wish to experience and enjoy the beauty of this popular, yet confined waterway. We are supportive because the current system is open to abuse and the proposal supports what should be a true balance of social, economic, environmental and cultural benefits on such a high-value, popular and yet confined – and currently congested - waterway.

There must however be a process to prevent abuse by a boat owner who moves their anchored boat within the same waterway eg., 100m away and claims it is a 'new anchorage'.

To alleviate the displacement of responsible boat owners, there should be an appropriate number of moorings available for local and visiting boat owners; this could be a mix of courtesy moorings for short stays (eg., less than 12 hrs) and longer stays (weeks or months). These moorings should be placed in multiple appropriate areas within the waterway where they are clear of fairways and channels, and yet support social, economic, environmental and cultural benefits. Such moorings, other than the courtesy ones, should apply a fee for use approach which is appropriate and not prohibitive to responsible boat owners. Such moorings could be management by local marine businesses eg., the local marina who have experience and systems to manage mooring/ berthing.



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To ensure congestion is managed on the shoreline of the Noosa River and Goat Island, MSQ proposes no anchoring for vessels over 5m in length for the perimeter of the main body of the Noosa River.

The anchoring zones are 30m from the shoreline and 60m from the shoreline. The 30m no anchoring zone is proposed due to the width of the river in certain places (refer to yellow area on [Map B \(PDF\)](#) for the following question). It is all the shoreline of the Noosa River, excluding the southern shoreline between Doonella Lake and Woods Bay, and the northern shoreline of Noosa Sound.

The 60m no anchoring zone is proposed to improve amenity for swimming and passive craft in the near shore area along the southern shoreline of the Noosa River between Doonella Lake and Woods Bay (refer to black striped area on [Map B \(PDF\)](#) for the following question).

Refer to Map B for the following question:

Q: Do you consider no anchoring zones for vessels over 5m in length to be an effective way to manage congestion in the Noosa River and surrounding waterways?*

A: We are supportive of the concept, however would recommend a modification of the 5m limit to 7.5m, recognizing that day-boat runabout/ family boat vessel size is now larger.

Q: How do you think these changes would impact on you, the waterway and other waterway users?

A: We support the proposed changes with the modification of the 5m limit to be 6m or perhaps 7.5m. The reasons include those mentioned previously. Unfortunately, some boat owners have demonstrated a willingness to abuse the privilege by leaving or living aboard their vessels at anchor for significantly extended periods or permanently, creating access, amenity, safety and environmental issues for others.



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Furthermore, the International Rules for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGS) which are overseen by the International Marine Organisation (IMO) and are recognised by Australian maritime regulators, state in Rule 9 Narrow Channels (g) the need to avoid anchoring in a narrow channel. And Noosa has lots of 'narrow channels' which should not be obstructed with anchoring by those who ignore or neglect the equality of access, safety and amenity of all.

It would help:

- keep the fairways and channels clear for safe and convenient navigation,
- keep the waterways clear of human waste
- keep the waterways clear of unsafe and environmentally threatening 'hulks'
- the shorelines clear of anchors and lines run ashore to posts and or trees etc; and
- improve the amenity and appeal of the waterway as a beautiful place for responsible boating for generations to come.

Q: Do you think no anchoring zones should apply to all vessels including those under 5m in length? *

A: No.

A 5m vessel is almost 16.5 feet -- the limit should be 7.5m. Family trailerboats were once commonly under 5m however these type of family craft are now longer and it would be more appropriate to enable these craft to anchor within reasonable proximity of the shore.

Such vessels including small trailerable sailboats are typically not designed for permanent live-aboard. They also represent the majority of family boats used for day outings, where a family should be able to anchor for lunch or to go ashore without impeding fairways or channels, or not obstructing public amenity by putting anchors ashore or securing to trees or structures ashore.

To ensure all vessels can access restaurants, facilities and other popular areas on land, MSQ proposes to allow all vessels, including those over 5m in length, to access the popular and congested shoreline (refer to the purple outlined area on [Map C \(PDF\)](#) for the following question). Temporary near shore access will be available for all vessels for four consecutive



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hours in any 24-hour period for all parts of the Noosa River, excluding the northern Shoreline of Noosa Sound.

Refer to Map C for the following question:

Q: Do you consider near shore access for all vessels will be an effective way to manage congestion along the shoreline, while also allowing access to restaurant, facilities and other areas?(refer Map C)*

A: Not supportive as it is.

What is 'near shore access'? If the idea is to allow any vessel to temporarily anchor within the no anchoring zones on either the south or north shores, then that is ok but it should not include anchoring ashore or securing to hitching posts, shoreside structures or trees as that undermines foreshore access, amenity and safety for the greater good. Furthermore, the 4 hours in any 24 period is messy.

If boats up to 7.5m can anchor near shore for day purposes that should be ok. Most boats under this size are not liveaboard. Furthermore, boats that are typically 8m or more in length eg houseboats and yachts do not need to be close to shore as they should have some form of tender.

Q: How do you think this change would impact on you, the waterway and other waterway users?

A: See above

To ensure congestion and on-water activities are managed effectively, MSQ proposes a no anchoring for unoccupied vessels over 5m in length in the section adjacent to Makepeace Island from Sheep Island north to just past the Tewantin Cable Ferry (**refer to the orange striped area on [Map D \(PDF\)](#) for the following question**).

Refer to Map D for the following question:



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Q: Do you consider the no anchoring zones for unoccupied vessels over 5m in length to be an effective way to manage congestion in the marked section of the river?*

A: We have grave concerns for any permanently unoccupied and anchored vessel as these limit social, economic, environmental and cultural benefits, whilst presenting a safety and amenity threat on popular waterways. Furthermore, the COLREGS require vessels at anchor to show appropriate lights at night for fundamental safety reasons – if they are unoccupied, how is that done?

There should be managed mooring fields with appropriate fees for long term/ permanent storage of in-water vessels. That would allow responsible owners to leave their vessels in a secure and appropriate location for longer periods, unoccupied.

Q: How do you think this change would impact on you, the waterway and other waterway users?

A: We do not think it goes far enough. For example, vessels should not be left at anchor indefinitely; such long stays should be on moorings or berths.

To ensure vessels that are transiting from other areas of the coast can visit the Noosa area as part of their trip, MSQ proposes to provide an anchoring zone specifically for transiting vessels for up to 10 consecutive days in the northern section of Noosa Sound (refer to the pink striped area on [Map E \(PDF\)](#) for the following question).

This area of the river is ideal as it is close to the entrance of the river from the coastal bar and provides adequate shelter in the event of adverse weather. MSQ intends for transiting vessels to also have the opportunity to use the 28 consecutive days anchoring zone (space permitting) and other areas of the river as permitted.

Refer to Map E for the following question:

Q: Do you consider the transit zone in the northern section of Noosa Sound will be effective for transiting vessels?*



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A: Supportive

The proposed name is ambiguous, call it a Visiting Vessel Anchorage. We think it is fair and reasonable in concept.

We think it is keeping with long-standing international maritime conventions to enable mariners to seek safe harbour to rest, recover and repair. 10 consecutive days is perhaps too short, make it 14.

Q: How do you think this change would impact on you, the waterway and other waterway users?

A: It would be an improvement and supports Responsible Boat Ownership. If there were appropriate mooring fields, clear of fairways and channels, then any such visiting vessel wishing to stay on for any reason could have the option to pay a fee for a suitable mooring.

Speed limits

To improve safety concerns MSQ is proposing to gazette 6 knots speed limit areas along the busy southern shore of the Noosa River between Doonella Lake and Woods Bay and the dog beach area south of the Frying Pan (refer to the red areas on [Map F \(PDF\)](#) for the following question).

Note: *Apart from these proposed speed limit changes the existing gazetted speed limits for the Noosa River will remain in place. This includes the temporary 6 knots speed limit set during peak holiday times.*

Refer to Map F for the following question:

Q: Do you consider the 6 knots speed limit zones will be an effective way to manage safety in the busy areas of the river?*

A: We are supportive of ensuring responsible boating and safe speeds near structures, shorelines, non-powered craft and people in the water.



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We support the proposal to manage speeds in appropriate areas. However, MSQ needs to review its existing speed rules. For example, in Qld the rules are: A speed limit of 6 knots:

- within 30m of
 - boats anchored, moored to the shore or aground
 - a jetty, wharf, pontoon or boat ramp within 30m of people in the water
- within 60m of people in the water when operating a personal watercraft
- in boat harbours and marinas

We would recommend MSQ adopt the NSW speed rules which are: at 6 knots or more, keep at least 30m clear of other vessels, land or structures, and 60m from swimmers or non-powered vessels. PWC have additional requirements in NSW and we would commend those for consideration also.

The NSW model is clear and provides greater safety for swimmers from all powered craft and adds recognition of the significant popularity of non-powered vessels and their vulnerability to wash from powercraft. The NSW model also enables compliance and enforcement of any vessel speed at more than 6 knots from 'land' which is not only safe but would completely cover the shoreline, whilst the combination of 30m and 60m rule would provide greater safety at 'The Dog Beach'.

Such an approach would do away with the need for another layer of local signage based upon area, as such a rule should apply across the waterway.

Q: How do you think this change would impact on you, the waterway and other waterway users?

A: Managing speed near shore, structures, non-powered boats and people in the water is necessary and should be managed via improved safe distance rules (as mentioned above) and must be delivered with a sustained and funded education and compliance program.

It would improve the safety, amenity and opportunity for more people to responsibly enjoy this waterway.



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Q: Do you think there are other ways to manage congestion problems on the Noosa River? If yes, provide your ideas:

A:

Yes, it is imperative that MSQ with support from Council deliver a sustained and funded Responsible Boat Ownership education and compliance program that runs for at least 3 years, with annual review/ reporting, and continues until behaviour change is achieved to an appropriate level and sustained.

MSQ must deliver a Responsible Boat Ownership campaign. This should promote responsible ownership across issues such as: purchase (eg., buy a seaworthy boat), insurance, storage, maintenance, repair, waste management and sale. The Boating Industry Association is ready and willing to help build and support delivery such a campaign.

This campaign idea should also be put to the Australian Recreational Boating Safety Committee for national support which would deliver cost efficiencies through economies of scale and also respond to what are national challenges in support of safe and responsible boating.

The solution should involve a multifaceted approach and apply the principles of waste hierarchy which is the method the EU incorporates into ship recycling.

Waste hierarchy

- 1) prevention/ waste minimisation;
- 2) preparing for re-use/ reuse;
- 3) recycling (recovery of materials)
- 4) other recovery, eg., energy recovery
- 5) disposal by landfill (to be minimised)

With reference to the waste hierarchy levels:

- 1) Prevention/ waste minimisation:

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Prevention is a priority and must include education. That should be built around the theme of 'Responsible Boat Ownership'. This should involve a coordinated, sustained and funded education program to cover promotion of the following:

- sustainable design and manufacturing
- recycling capability
- boat buyer's guide to help ensure people buy a vessel suited to their budget, area of use and ability (the latter includes repair and maintenance realities)
 - needs to provide information tailored to 'new' and also 'used' boat buyers
- owner's guide to help people care for and maintain their vessel
- alternatives to ownership which can be boat share, charter, hire etc and peer-to-peer boating experience.
- boat owner's disposal guide esp., on approach to or arrival at ELV such as:
 - reuse, recycle and disposal
- a collaborative, multi-jurisdiction approach
 - esp., to deal with cross border issues
- led by regulators (eg., Australian Recreational Boating Safety Committee – ARBSC)
- supported by stakeholders (eg., Australia and New Zealand Safe Boating Education Group and manufacturers)
- apply an evidence-based approach
- aimed at specific demographics through lifecycle of the boat
 - eg., age-specific communications to specific geographical areas
- apply contemporary communications tools and channels
- apply plain English appropriate to the demographics
- with a medium to long term lifespan (eg., 5-10 years with review and reset every year to accommodate fine tuning)
- be monitored and reported upon (eg. to ARBSC).
- appropriate regulatory consequence
- appropriate compliance.

BIA recommends improved actions to prevent pollution of the waterway. There should be more vessel pump out stations in this waterway and any fee must not be a barrier to use.



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BIA calls for more moorings both courtesy (limited in time for use) and commercial moorings which are based upon appropriate user pays. Cleaning up the current abuse of anchoring privileges will open up areas for organised mooring fields clear of the fairways and channels.

BIA calls for improved infrastructure to support safe and convenient access to this waterway. That includes appropriate ramps with adequate parking and supporting pontoons to assist people of all ages and abilities to enjoy boating in this area.

Background

Maps are provided which mark the proposed changes to vessel waterways management.

- [Map A—Proposed anchoring zones and 6 knots speed limit Noosa Waterways \(PDF, 1.5 MB\)](#) (Opens in new window)
Proposed anchoring zones and 6 knots speed limit Noosa Waterways

Notes:

- [Map B—Proposed 28 consecutive days restriction and no anchoring zones Noosa Waterways \(PDF, 1.4 MB\)](#) (Opens in new window)
Proposed 28 consecutive days restriction and no anchoring zones Noosa Waterways
- [Map C—Proposed near shore access Noosa River \(PDF, 1.2 MB\)](#) (Opens in new window)
Proposed near shore access Noosa River
- [Map D—Proposed no anchoring zone vessels unoccupied ships over 5 meters Noosa River \(PDF, 1.2 MB\)](#) (Opens in new window)
Proposed no anchoring zone vessels unoccupied ships over 5 meters Noosa River
- [Map E—Proposed transit anchoring zone 10 days maximum Noosa River \(PDF, 1.2 MB\)](#) (Opens in new window)
Proposed transit anchoring zone 10 days maximum Noosa River
- [Map F—Proposed 6 knots speed limit Noosa River \(PDF\)](#) (Opens in new window)
Proposed 6 knots speed limit Noosa River



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In closing, BIA supports the intent of improved management of this important waterway. We support a Safe Systems approach to Safe People, Safe Vessels and Safe Waterways with actions such as:

- fairways and channels that are kept clear and open for safe navigation;
- keeping human sewage from all sources out of the waterway;
- safe and convenient access for people of all ages and abilities;
- managing speed based upon general skipper responsibility and the COLREGS rather than zones;
- appropriate anchoring requirements including being lit at night and vessel 'seaworthiness';
- improved mooring solutions;
- improved access, launching and storage solutions;
- visiting vessels;
- vessels of all types across paddle, power and sail;
- safe, enjoyable and responsible boating; and
- Responsible Boat Ownership.

Please do not hesitate to contact Neil Patchett, General Manager Government & Public Relations, e. neil@bia.org.au or m. 0418 279 465 on this matter. Neil resides and works in the Noosa LGA and is willing and able to meet to discuss any of the above.

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