

Our ref 215/165/2
Your ref
Enquiries Hal Morris

18 December 2013

Hon Scott Emerson MP
Minister for Transport and Main Roads
GPO Box 2644
Brisbane Qld 4001

Dear Minister,

There are major opportunities to improve access, management and environmental performance of buoy moorings on the Gold Coast. This was recognised in the draft 10-year Waterways Management Strategy and confirmed in our recent community consultation.

We are ready to start focused consultation and investigation of options that best suit the Gold Coast. We will then identify a preferred option and develop a comprehensive implementation plan. Our consultation plan is attached for your information.

The GCWA Board has asked me to write to you and ensure that you are aware of our planned process and the benefits that are being sought. These benefits are:

- Greater access to moorings with higher density that will increase the number of people able to enjoy the waterways while cutting the waiting lists
- Improved environmental performance from the replacement of outdated swing moorings with modern environmentally friendly mooring hardware – with an added benefit of seagrass offsets that will be used to support the environmental approvals needed for our dredging program
- Better mooring management arrangements that may see the private sector taking a greater role in managing moorings, as they already do for marinas.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hal Morris".

Hal Morris
Chief Executive Officer

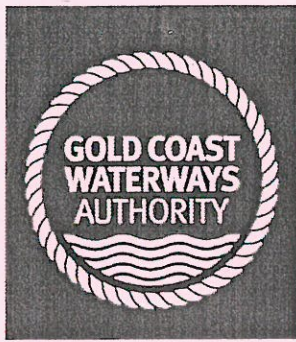
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Buoy Moorings Review

Consultation Plan
December 2013

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Abbreviations

BMA	Buoy Mooring Authority
GCWA	Gold Coast waterways Authority
MSQ	Maritime Safety Queensland
SYC	Southport Yacht Club
DTMR	Department of Transport and Main Roads

Purpose of Gold Coast Waterways Authority

The Gold Coast Waterways Authority (GCWA) was established by the *Gold Coast Waterways Authority Act 2012* to strategically plan for, facilitate and manage the development and use of the Gold Coast waterways. The primary purposes for establishing the GCWA were to:

- deliver the best possible management of the Gold Coast waterways at reasonable cost to the community and government, while keeping government regulation to a minimum
- plan for and facilitate the development of the Gold Coast waterways over the long term in a way that is sustainable and considers the impact of development on the environment
- improve and maintain navigational access to the Gold Coast waterways
- develop and improve public marine facilities relating to the Gold Coast waterways
- promote and manage the sustainable use of the Gold Coast waterways for marine industries, tourism and recreation.

Issues and Opportunities

Access

Access to moorings is limited and there are long waiting lists. In November 2013 there were 465 swing moorings in Gold Coast waters with about the same number of applicants on the waiting list. Waiting times in some popular areas exceed 10 years.

Options to improve access include:

- Increasing density in current mooring areas with the use of updated infrastructure
- Encouraging vessel owners to take up alternative storage methods such as marinas, or on-shore options such as dry stack storage
- Increasing the areas available for moorings.
(Note: This option is **not** considered viable in light of the increasing demand for space on the water from all users and the inefficient manner in which swing moorings utilise the available water space.)

Environmental Performance

The technology of current swing moorings on the Gold Coast is outdated. Most have a weight, such as a block of concrete, joined by a metal chain to a buoy on the surface of the water. The installation requires an annual inspection and subsequent submission of a declaration providing a detailed description of the mooring apparatus and a statement that *'the current condition of the apparatus is structurally adequate for the nominated vessel kept on the mooring and is sufficient to remain on site in all conditions'*.

Such inspections can be carried out by either a professional (e.g. marine/civil engineer, commercial diving business, mooring inspection contractor) or an individual (such as the mooring owner). Generally, most inspections are carried out by an individual, which in many cases results in undesirable side-effects related primarily to an inaccurate assessment of the apparatus's condition (e.g. vessels colliding with other vessels/structures when a mooring fails and they become adrift or the mooring block drags).

The chain is subject to corrosion in the salt water and the block can move position in strong tides, winds or floods. Also, as the wind direction and tides change, the moored vessel moves and drags the chain across the seabed. The constant movement of the chain creates an area where seagrass and other benthic life cannot grow, known as a 'dead zone' or 'crop circle'.

Options are available to improve the environmental performance of the mooring system, especially in regard to the 'dead zone'/'crop circle' issue, such as the installation of various environmentally friendly moorings systems that not only increase mooring density (*i.e.* decrease the per vessel footprint) they also keep the ground tackle of the mooring system up off the seabed.

Following the installation of an environmentally friendly mooring system, the regeneration of seagrass and other benthic life in the existing 'dead zone'/'crop circle' footprint can be measured and recorded and used as environmental offset 'credits' to balance the environmental impacts of the dredging program.

Management of moorings

Most swing moorings in Gold Coast waters are managed by the Gold Coast Waterways Authority (GCWA). Buoy Mooring Authorities are renewed annually for a fee of \$45.65. Revenue from the process is remitted in full to consolidated revenue. GCWA is funded to administer the swing moorings as part of its annual allocation from Treasury.

The exception to this is 65 swing moorings in the southern Broadwater that are managed by the Southport Yacht Club (SYC) under contract from GCWA (in a quasi-Category 1 scenario). The SYC charges fees for these swing moorings and also provides mooring tenants with access to showers, toilets and car parking.

GCWA has one member of staff committed full time to completing the paperwork, investigation complaints, monitoring compliance, managing native title, responding to enquiries and generally administering moorings. Management time is also committed to moorings.

The *Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Regulation 2004* as amended gives the GCWA power to create Category 1 and Category 2 mooring areas. Specifically;

"207A (3) The Gold Coast Waterways Authority may, by written agreement with a person (a mooring manager), vest in the person the management and control of buoy moorings within a Category 1 area in Gold Coast waters."

The Category 1 option provides a suitable model to improve the management of moorings. As such, the viability of establishing a Category 1 buoy mooring area/s and appointing a mooring manager/s should be investigated so that a mooring manager could effectively—

- Invest in infrastructure to improve environmental performance and access/density
- Charge appropriate fees for the use of the moorings
- Set conditions for placement and use of the moorings.

It is expected that, in return for improved access, shorter waiting times and improved services, the mooring manager would charge appropriate fees at a commercial rate. At the moment vessel owners can moor their vessels at a swing mooring or in a marina. The creation of category 1 mooring areas would create a third option for owners.

Consultation

Consultation on these issues and options is now needed. Groups and individuals to be consulted include (but are not limited to):

- Environmental groups and government agencies
- Department of Transport and Main Roads (DTMR)

- Maritime Safety Queensland (MSQ)
- Current holders of moorings
- Applicants on the mooring waiting list
- City of Gold Coast
- Southport Yacht Club
- Motor boat and sailing clubs
- Marine Queensland and other relevant industry groups
- Member of the public and their elected representatives

Channels for consultation will include:

- Social media
- GCWA website
- Written or online survey to current mooring holders and those on the waiting lists
- Public invitation to comment.

Change management

Once the preferred option is identified through stakeholder consultation, it is essential that it is carefully implemented in a way that minimises negative impacts. In particular this should include ensuring that:

- Environmental offset credits are real and are accurately measured, recorded and reported
- Current buoy mooring holders are given first opportunity to move to the new arrangements in their area
- Current authority holders who have a swing mooring in an area that becomes a Category 1 area, that elect not to stay in the area under the new arrangements, would join the front of the cue for a remaining swing mooring in another area.
- Current mooring holders displaced by GCWA improvements to the channel network are also given priority (either to an alternative mooring, mooring location or on the waiting list).
- Those on the waiting lists for swing moorings are given the option to move on to a mooring in a Category 1 mooring area.

Timing

December 2013	Consultation plan finalised
	Minister Emerson advised
Mid-January 2014	Consultation period starts
	Discussion paper and survey released
1 March 2014	Consultation period ends
17 March 2014	GCWA Board asked to endorse preferred option
April 2014	Implementation starts with call for expressions of interest from potential mooring managers