

Consultation Summary Report

Mackay Port Access – Fish Habitat Area Revocation Proposal

Period of consultation: 7 February – 7 March 2025

Date: 1 July 2025



Copyright

This publication is protected by the *Copyright Act 1968*.

© The State of Queensland (Department of Transport and Main Roads) 2024. All rights reserved.

Disclaimer

This publication is provided as a source of information only and the State of Queensland makes no statements, representations or warranties about its accuracy or completeness. To the extent permitted by law, the State of Queensland disclaims all responsibility for decisions or actions taken as a result of any data, information, statement or advice, expressed or implied, contained within and excludes all liability (including, without limitation, liability in negligence) for all expenses, losses, damages and costs that may be incurred.

Contact

Enquiries about the use of any material in this publication can be sent to the department at: copyright@tmr.qld.gov.au.

Contents

Executive summary	3
Budget allocation	3
Background	3
Environmental and Cultural Heritage	5
Project map	6
Consultation and engagement activities	6
Social Pinpoint landing page	7
Member contributions by location	8
Key stakeholders	9
Media outcomes	10
Feedback received	13
Graphs and dashboard	14
Review of feedback	15
Community sentiment sample	15
Collateral examples	16
Outcomes	17
Key themes	18
Community sentiment sample	18
Next steps	19
Timeline	20

Executive summary

A business case is in development for the Mackay Port Access, Bruce Highway to Mackay – Slade Point Road (Stage 1) project (MPA). The current planning process includes the investigation of a proposed heavy vehicle access route identified in the Mackay Ring Road planning completed in 2013.

Current planning will confirm the alignment of a 9.5km, 2-lane arterial roadway, parallel to Queensland Rail (QR) Harbour Rail Line, from the Bruce Highway to Mackay-Slade Point Road (Harbour Road).

Planning activities include business case development, securing the corridor, public utility relocations, implementing environmental offset measures and stakeholder engagement. The business case will also determine the proposed scope for Stage 1 construction.

The proposed alignment for the MPA project passes through the environmentally sensitive Bassett Basin, which is a declared fish habitat area (FHA) under the *Fisheries Act 1994 (the Act)*. A FHA revocation process is proposed to address the requirements of the MPA.

Current investigations for the MPA have identified 20 hectares of FHA needed to accommodate the final alignment and secure the land requirement for the road corridor. This requires a formal revocation process, guided by the Queensland Government *Operational Policy: Marine Management – Fish Habitat Area selection, assessment, declaration, and review* (FHA Operation Policy).

Budget allocation

The MPA planning project is funded in the *Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program 2025–26 to 2028–29* under the Bruce Highway Upgrade Program [Investment ID 1170084].

\$29.8 million has been allocated to the business case which commenced in early 2019 and is scheduled for finalisation by mid-2026.

Background

The MPA is a proposed new 9.5 km road linking the Mackay Ring Road to the Port of Mackay. The alignment runs west to east and parallels the QR Harbour Rail Line within the established multi-modal transport corridor, before deviating to connect to Harbour Road.

This multi-modal corridor, extending from Erakala to the Port of Mackay, has been the subject of ongoing planning and development since 1977. Efforts have focused on integrating multiple transport modes to support regional growth and improve connectivity.

The proposed alignment of the MPA includes two connections to the local road network, with the objective of supporting both freight efficiency and commuter use.

The project is divided into three sections.

- Sections 1 and 2 involve more conventional urban construction activities.
- Section 3 presents greater complexity, as it traverses the Bassett Basin, an environmentally and hydraulically sensitive area comprising mudflats, dense mangroves, and salt couch communities.

A portion of the alignment within the Bassett Basin passes through a declared Fish Habitat Area (FHA) under the *Fisheries 1994 Act (the Act)*. To secure the MPA corridor, amendments to the declared Bassett Basin FHA boundaries are required. Approximately 20 hectares of the FHA identified in the original MRR planning must be revoked through a formal revocation process, as outlined by the FHA Operation Policy.

To mitigate potential impacts to the FHA, TMR has undertaken a study engaging with key stakeholders including surrounding property owners whose land contained areas considered likely to be suitable as candidate land compensation sites for the revoked area within a *Fish Habitat Area Revocation Assessment Study*. Back in 2021, a Terms of Reference for the *Fish Habitat Area Revocation Assessment Study* was discussed and confirmed with the Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI), which at the time was responsible for the management of declared FHAs. However, in 2024, a change in government led to the transition of FHA management responsibilities to the Department of Primary Industries (DPI).

The study included an examination of:

- existing features of the proposed revocation area
- current and potential future land uses
- habitat types and environmental values
- social and economic considerations
- potential impacts and mitigation measures
- suitability of candidate land compensation sites
- consultation with First Nations groups and the broader community.

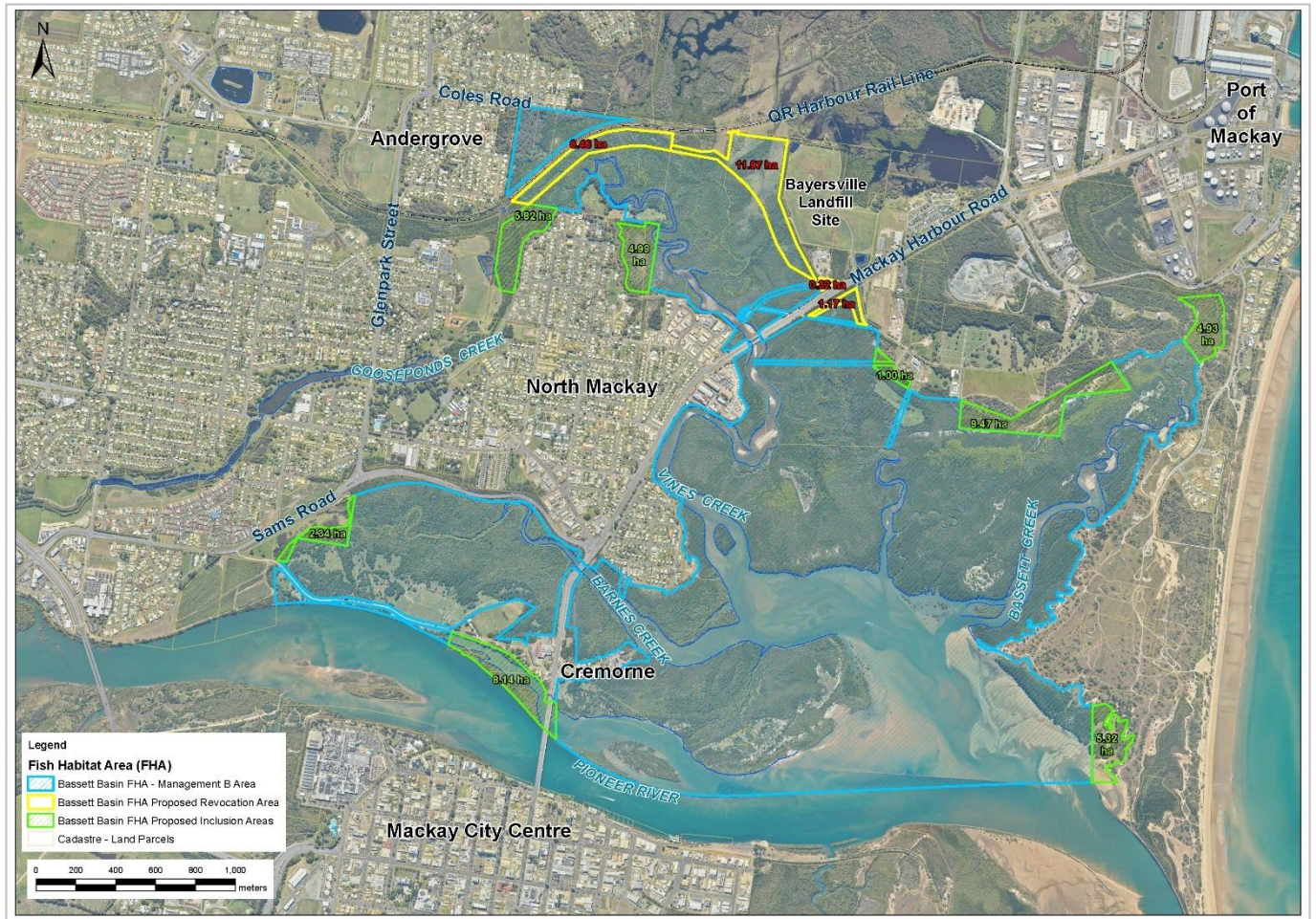
Following property owners' acceptance, environmental field studies were conducted on both the proposed project footprint and candidate land compensation sites, in alignment with the Terms of Reference, to assess their suitability for inclusion in a revocation proposal.

The revocation of the Bassett Basin FHA impacted by the project footprint is seen as a key component of the business case and critical to ensuring long-term feasibility of the Mackay Port Access Road. Completing the revocation during the business case phase will remove a major planning constraint and provide certainty of the corridor to achieve the project's ultimate objectives, of improved heavy vehicle access to the Port of Mackay.

A rejection of the proposed revocation of FHA boundaries to accommodate the road corridor through Bassett Basin would render Section 3 of the MPAR unviable. Without this critical link, the objective of improving heavy vehicle access to the Port of Mackay cannot be met. This outcome would significantly undermine the strategic justification for the \$350 million investment in Section 1 of the MPAR, effectively resulting in the first stage of an arterial corridor that lacks a viable connection to its intended destination.

The revocation proposal included the addition of eight areas totalling ~42.5 hectares, which would expand the overall Bassett Basin FHA by ~22.5 hectares above the 20 hectares required for the project footprint. These additional areas will provide ecological value for fish communities and the broader habitat.

A Bassett Basin Fish Habitat Revocation Communication Engagement Plan was developed in collaboration with DETSI and formally adopted. Broad community engagement was undertaken between 7 February 2025 and 7 March 2025 to inform the community and industry about TMR's revocation proposal and provide an opportunity for comment.



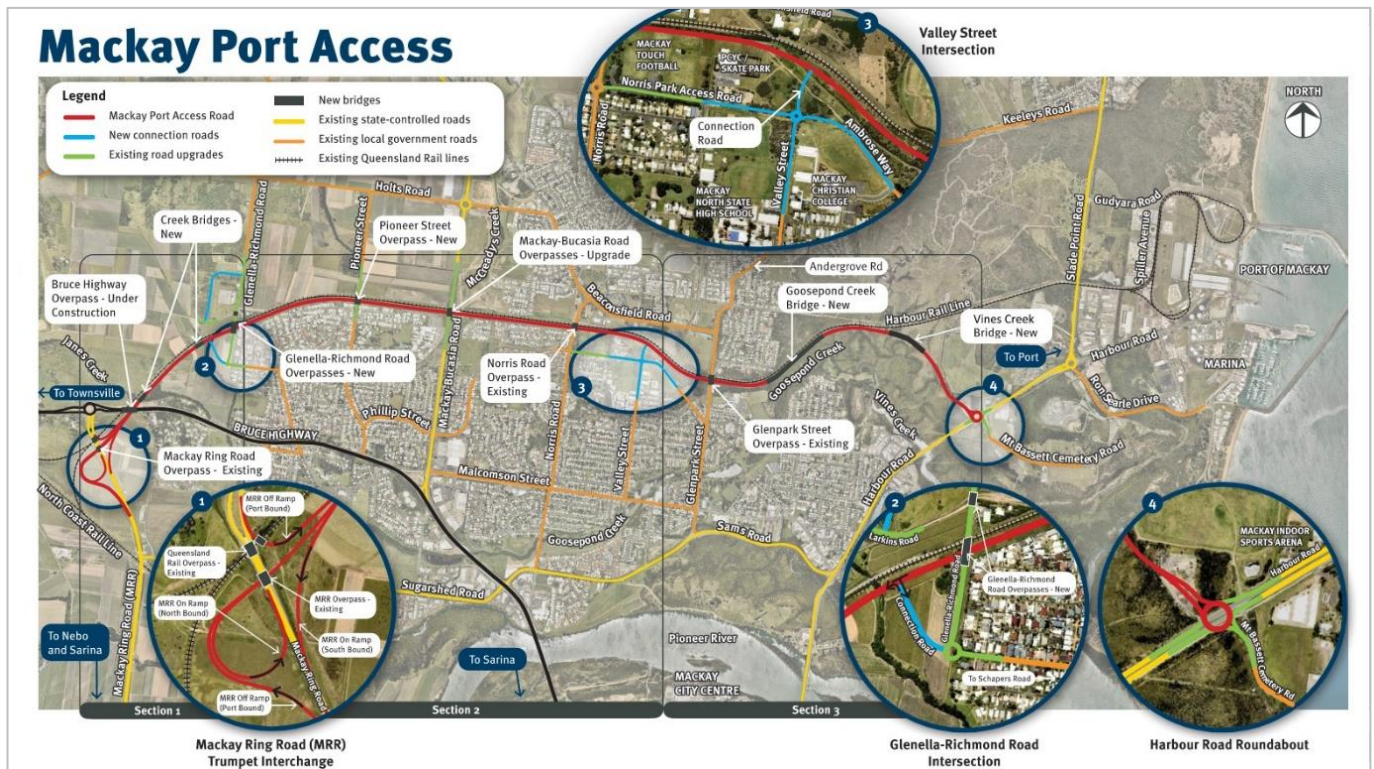
Fish Habitat Area (FHA)

Environmental and Cultural Heritage

Environmental and Cultural Heritage studies have been completed for both the proposed revocation area and the land compensation areas proposed for inclusion in the FHA. Findings from these studies indicate that the proposed revocation area contains vegetation communities dominated by mangroves and saltmarsh of good condition, with a low abundance and diversity of macroinvertebrate communities.

The waterways and flats within the FHA directly support recreational fishing for species such as whiting, bream, flathead and bait species. Most commercial fishing in the local area occurs outside the declared FHA primarily within the main Pioneer River estuary, targeting species such as mullet. The habitats and ecological processes within the FHA are critical to supporting the lifecycle of these commercially targeted species. The Bassett Basin is located within Yuwi Country. Cultural Heritage and Environmental surveys have been undertaken in partnership with Yuwi representatives and continue to occur to improve the understanding of the basin's cultural significance. Land within the basin contains a range of traditional resources such as clams, mud crabs and a wide variety of fish species. The Yuwi Aboriginal Corporation (YAC) has been actively consulted and involved throughout the entire process to ensure cultural values are respected and considered in decision making.

Project map



Consultation and engagement activities

Broad community and industry engagement was undertaken from 7 February to 7 March 2025 to inform stakeholders about TMR's proposal to revoke a portion of the declared Bassett Basin Fish Habitat Area (FHA). This revocation is required to secure the road corridor for the proposed road and bridge infrastructure associated with the Mackay Port Access project.

A key component of the engagement strategy was the creation of an online engagement webpage, hosted via TMR's engagement platform, Social Pinpoint, at [Mackay Port Access | TMR Projects](#).

The online engagement page featured:

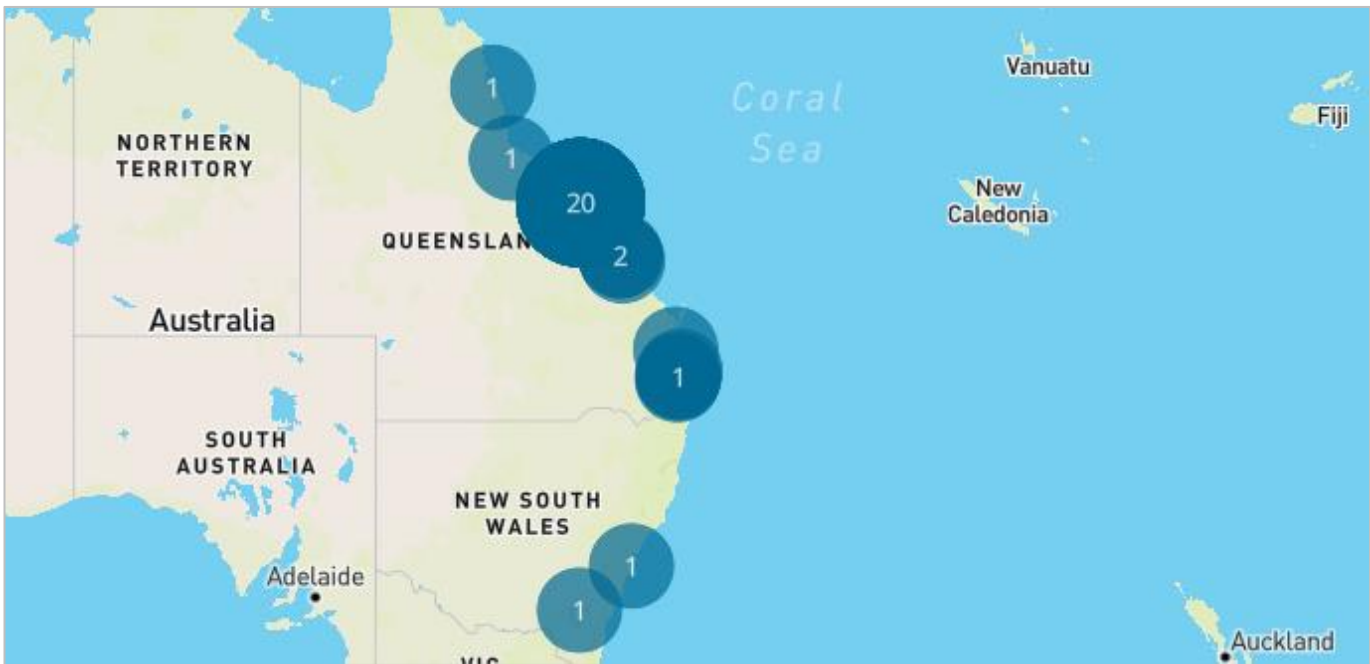
- an overview of the planning project and timeframes for delivery of the planning process outcome (business case)
- a map showing the current declared Bassett Basin FHA and the proposed revocation area and the proposed compensation FHA sites
- a link to the fact sheet providing further information about the proposal and the Bassett Basin
- an invitation for community members and stakeholders to provide feedback or comments on the proposal.

The online consultation was supported by a range of communication activities including:

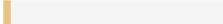
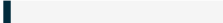
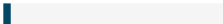
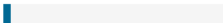
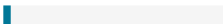
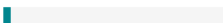
- direct correspondence to key stakeholders (including environmental groups and elected representatives) to inform them of the engagement process
- public notice in the Daily Mercury and Mackay Whitsunday Life
- a targeted social media post
- promotional A4 posters displayed on various community noticeboards throughout Mackay.

Member contributions by location

To provide insight into the geographic distribution of community and industry feedback, the following map and table illustrate the number of contributions received by location. This data helps demonstrate the reach and local engagement achieved during the consultation period.



Member Contributions by Location					
Information regarding the location of Members who have made contributions in your engagement activity.					
Location	Postcode	Contributors	Contributions		
Eimeo	4740	20	20		56%
Taranganba	4703	2	2		6%
Clontarf	4019	1	1		3%
Crystal Creek	4816	1	1		3%
Fortitude Valley	4006	1	1		3%
Graceville	4075	1	1		3%
Kuttabul	4741	1	1		3%
Lyons	2606	1	1		3%
Marian	4753	1	1		3%
Marrickville	2204	1	1		3%

Location	Postcode	Contributors	Contributions	
Mcdowall	4053	1	1	 3%
Netherdale	4756	1	1	 3%
South Brisbane	4101	1	1	 3%
Speewah	4881	1	1	 3%
Weyba Downs	4562	1	1	 3%
Zilzie	4710	1	1	 3%

Key stakeholders

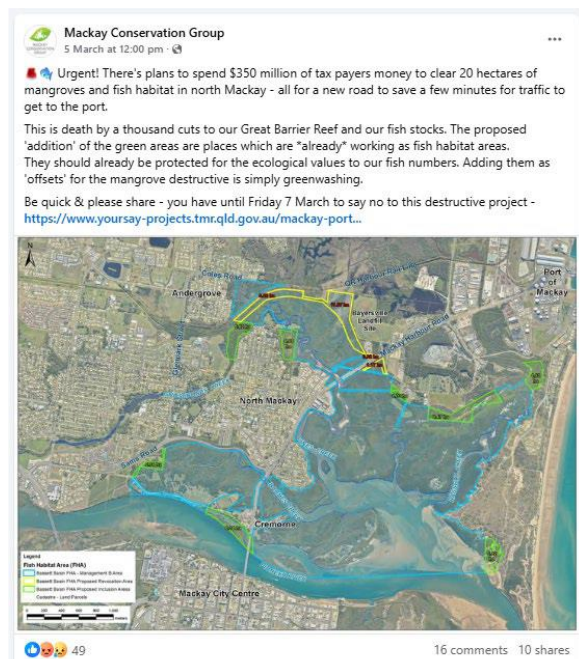
The target audience for the community engagement included:

- broad Mackay community
- traditional owners – the Yuwi Aboriginal Corporation
- elected representatives:
 - Mr Nigel Dalton MP, Member for Mackay
 - Ms Amanda Camm MP, Member for Whitsunday
 - Mr Andrew Willcox MP, Member for Dawson
 - Cr Greg Williamson, Mayor, Mackay Regional Council
 - Cr Karen May, Deputy Mayor, Mackay Regional Council
- targeted environmental and industry organisations:
 - Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation
 - Department of Primary Industries
 - Mackay Regional Council
 - Mackay Broadcasters Pty Ltd
 - North Queensland Bulk Ports
 - Department of Resources
 - Reef Catchments
 - Healthy Rivers to Reef Partnership
 - Mackay Conservation Group
 - Pioneer Catchment Landcare
 - Yuwi Aboriginal Corporation
 - Australian Marine Conservation Society
 - Mackay Recreational Fishing Alliance
 - Ozfish Unlimited
 - Sunfish Queensland
 - Queensland Seafood Industry Association

Media outcomes

The Mackay Conservation Group has used its social media platforms to encourage public comment on the proposed fish habitat revocation. The conservation group is advocating for the protection of marine life and habitats, emphasising the ecological importance of the area.

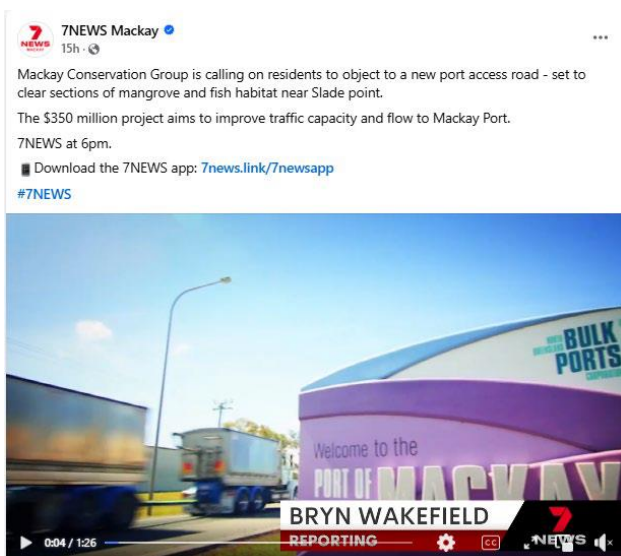
Concurrently, reports have surfaced regarding an escalation in cost estimate for the Mackay Port Access project. The purpose of this infrastructure project is to improve heavy vehicle access to the Port of Mackay, and enhance road network connectivity in the region, ultimately support the regional economy. The media coverage of construction cost escalation, released by the Queensland Government, has prompted commentary among stakeholders, including local businesses and environmental groups.



Mackay Conservation Group Facebook 5/3/25



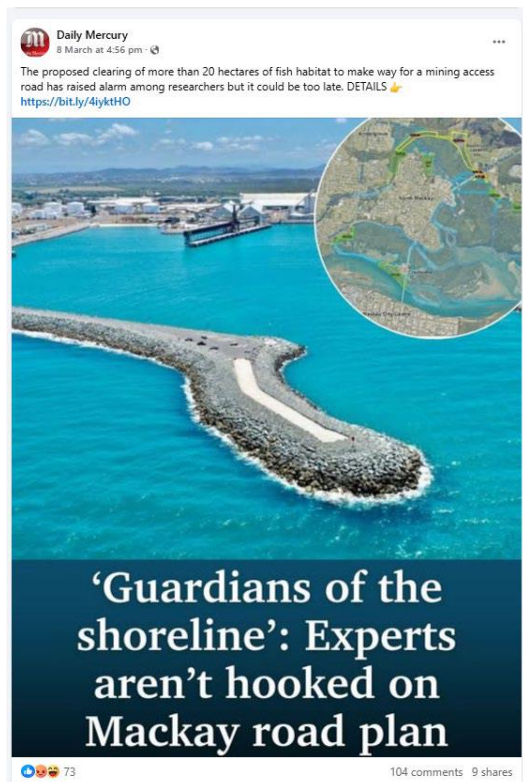
Mackay Conservation Group Facebook 6/3/25



Channel 7 Facebook 7/3/25



Mackay Conservation Group Facebook 7/3/25



[Daily Mercury Facebook 8/3/25](#)

‘Guardians of the shoreline’: Why fish experts aren’t hooked on road plan



North Queensland Bulk Ports operates the Port of Mackay. Picture: Facebook

[Daily Mercury 10/3/25](#)



[Daily Mercury Facebook 9/3/25](#)



[Mackay Conservation Group 14/3/25](#)



[Mackay Conservation Group Instagram 16/3/25](#)



[Mackay Conservation Group 18/3/25](#)

Labor accused of \$6.7bn in secret project blowouts across road and transport pipeline



STAFF WRITER

March 18, 2025, 10:51 am



The cost of the new road to the Mackay port has increased by 327 per cent. Image: Rafael Ben-Ari/stock.adobe.com

[Big Rigs 18/3/25](#)

No guarantees for Mackay Port Access road, after cost blows out by \$1bn

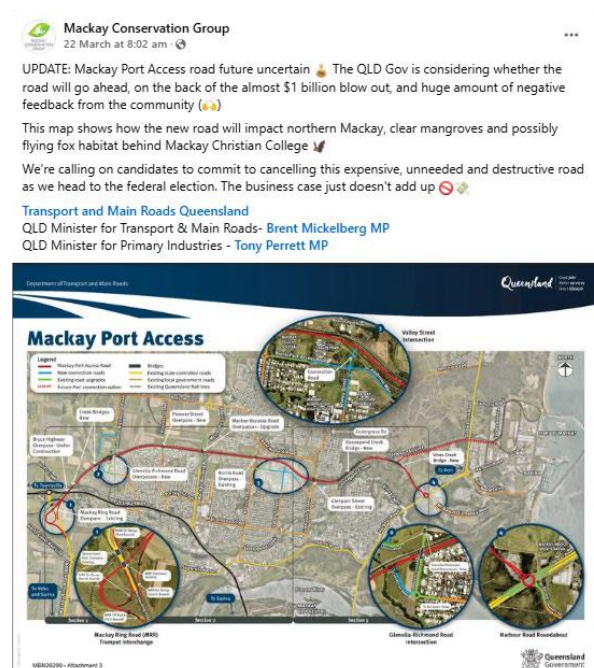
After the Qld government revealed the cost of a major road project had ballooned out by \$1bn, it wouldn't commit to building it.

[Luke Lay](#)

March 20, 2025 - 10:00AM



[Daily Mercury 20/3/25](#)



[Mackay Conservation Group Facebook 22/3/25](#)

Feedback received

Community feedback was gathered over the four-week engagement period through multiple channels. A total of 36 submissions were received via the TMR social pinpoint engagement webpage, with an additional 13 submissions provided via direct email.

To further raise awareness, a geo-targeted TMR social media post ran for a total of 17 days, generating 74 comments and 2,273 impressions. Comments were generally balanced, with key themes focused on the need for future infrastructure versus potential environmental impacts.

Notable increases in engagement on the Social Pinpoint page were observed from 19 February 2025, coinciding with the launch of the paid geo-targeted social media post. A second spike in activity occurred between 4 and 7 March 2025, following advocacy by the Mackay Conservation Group, who promoted the engagement through Facebook posts, a member newsletter and broader media outreach.

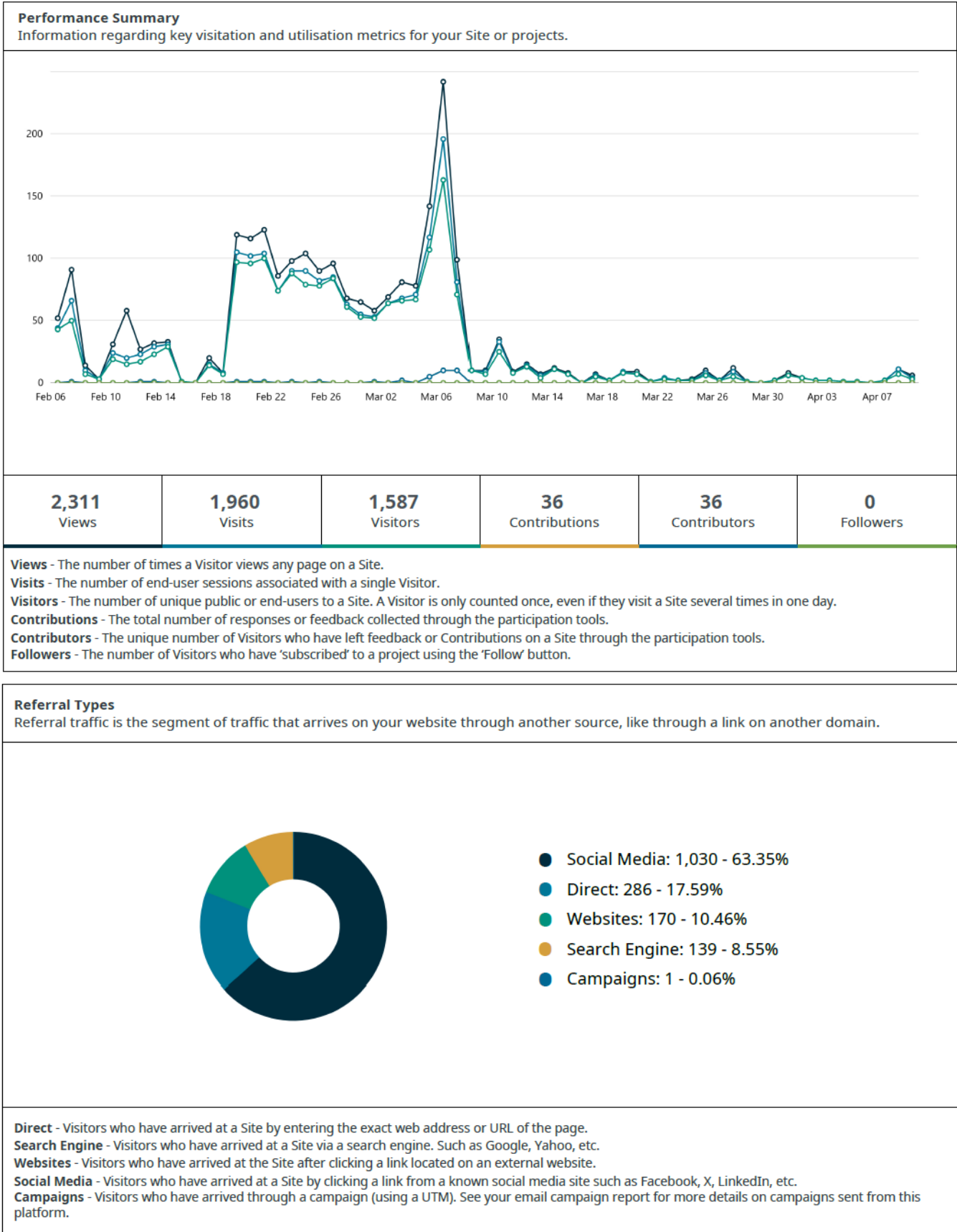
The key data from the consultation feedback is tabulated below.

	36 submissions received via the Social Pinpoint online engagement hub
	13 submissions received via email
	2,052 visits to the Social Pinpoint online webpage
	Social media post (geotargeted)
	2,273 Social media post impressions

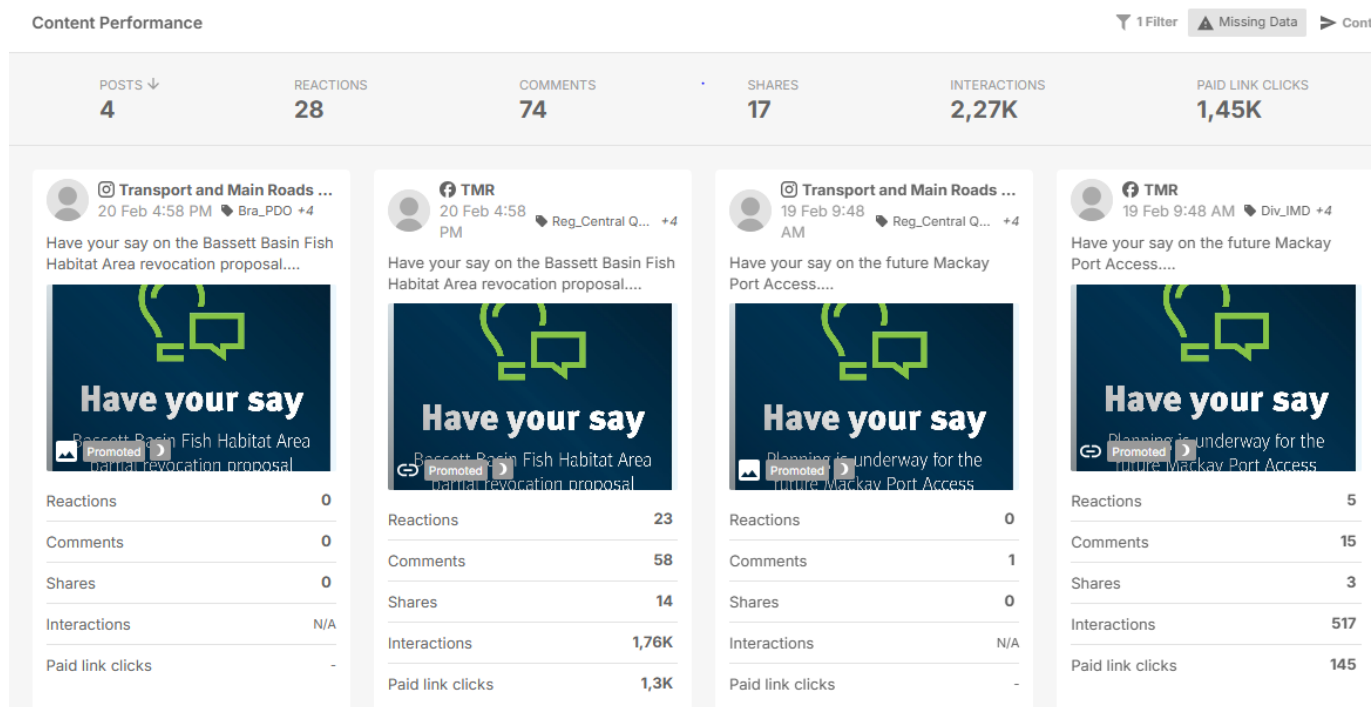
Table - Consutlation data breakdown

Graphs and dashboard

Social Pinpoint



Social media dashboard



Review of feedback

As part of the consultation process, TMR have received a wide range of feedback. All feedback will be thoroughly reviewed to ensure that every concern is carefully considered. TMR is committed to carrying out the project with minimal environmental impact, ensuring that environmental considerations remain a priority throughout the planning process.

TMR has issued closeout letters or emails to all individuals and organisations that provided submissions. These communications acknowledge the contributions received and outline how the feedback will be considered.

Community sentiment sample

"I do not agree with the building of an access road - the fish habitat must be protected."

~ Community member

"Mangroves are a really important part of the marine environment and should be protected not filled in. Please reconsider your road development."

~ Community member

"I support the building of the Mackay Port Access Road and the removal of associated environmental constraints."

~ Community member

"I think it's a small compromise to change the fisheries area so that we can move forward with better access to the port for all the heavy vehicles."

~ Community member

Collateral examples

Department of Transport and Main Roads

Proposed Fish Habitat Area (FHA) Revocation – Bassett Basin

February 2025

FACT SHEET



Overview

The proposed alignment for the future Mackay Port Access (MPA) runs parallel to the existing Queensland Rail Harbour Rail Line corridor, commencing at the Bruce Highway, Glenella and continuing east to the Mackay Port.

The proposed alignment passes through the Bassett Basin, which is an area containing significant environmental, cultural and heritage values.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) is committed to minimising and mitigating environmental and cultural heritage impacts resulting from the project's delivery.

The future MPA will provide a range of economic, social and transport efficiency benefits to the Mackay/Whitsunday region.

The MPA project is aimed at providing a direct link for freight movements from the Mackay Port to the Mackay Ring Road, and west to the Bowen Basin coal fields.

Photo: Vines Creek estuary within the Bassett Basin Fish Habitat Area

Australian Government | BUILDING AUSTRALIA | Queensland Government

Department of Transport and Main Roads

Have your say

Bassett Basin Fish Habitat Area revocation proposal

We're seeking community input on the proposed Bassett Basin Fish Habitat Area revocation as part of planning for the future Mackay Port Access.

For more details and to share your feedback, visit
www.yoursay-projects.tmr.qld.gov.au/mackay-port-access-FHApromposal
Consultation closes 7 March 2025.

Photos: Estuarine vegetation within the Fish Habitat Area (Top)
 Vines Creek estuary within the Bassett Basin Fish Habitat Area (Below)

Australian Government | BUILDING AUSTRALIA | Queensland Government

Transport and Main Roads Queensland's post

Transport and Main Roads Queensland

20 February at 16:58

Have your say on the Bassett Basin Fish Habitat Area revocation proposal.

We're seeking community input on the proposed Bassett Basin Fish Habitat Area revocation as part of our planning for the future Mackay Port Access.

For more details and to share your feedback please click learn more.

Consultation closes Friday 7 March 2025.



Have your say

Bassett Basin Fish Habitat Area partial revocation proposal

YOURSAY-PROJECTS.TMR.QLD.GOV.AU

Bassett Basin Fish Habitat Area revocation proposal

Have your say on the Fish Habitat Area revocation proposal

[Learn more](#)

16 48 comments 14 shares

32 CLASSIFIEDS

Mackay Daily Mercury | Friday February 14, 2025

buy search sell .com.au

Welcome to Australia's leading network of trusted local classifieds

To place business advertising call 13 11 13 or business@bss.com.au

Adults

Adult & Escort Services

NOT INDOCHINA

Call 13 11 13

Public Notice – Partial Revocation Proposal – Bassett Basin Fish Habitat Area

The Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) is inviting comment on a proposal to revoke a portion (approximately 20 hectares) of the declared Bassett Basin Fish Habitat Area (FHA), to accommodate road and bridge infrastructure associated with the proposed alignment for the future Mackay Port Access project.

The Bassett Basin FHA is located on the northern side of the Pioneer River at Mackay and includes the tidal sections of Vines, Bamee and Goosepond creeks. Members of the public are invited to provide comment on the proposed revocation area and on the proposed addition of right-of-way areas, containing tidal fish habitat totalling approximately 2.5 hectares, to the FHA to compensate for the revocation.

FHA's are declared and managed under the provisions of the Fisheries Act 1994 and protect key areas of high-quality fish habitats for the purpose of sustaining Queensland's fish stocks and fisheries. Declared FHA management provides long-term protection for the natural fish habitats, while allowing the continued community use and enjoyment of the area. Please note that activities such as legal recreational, commercial, and traditional fishing and boating can continue in a declared FHA.

An information package detailing the proposal, including a plan of the proposed revocation area and areas for addition to the FHA, plus details on how to provide a submission on the proposal can be obtained at the TMR online survey site at <http://www.yoursay-projects.tmr.qld.gov.au/mackay-port-access-FHApromposal> Submissions close on 7 March 2025.

Feedback received through the consultation process will be considered for incorporation into a Declared Fish Habitat Area Revocation Assessment Study which will be submitted to the Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation to inform final assessment of the revocation proposal.

Queensland Government

Going, going, gone

Find local auctions at Buy Search Sell.

buy search sell .com.au

02.12.2025 18:13 NewsCorp Australia - Tearsheet

Outcomes

At the conclusion of the consultation period in March 2025, the feedback collected was provided to the TMR project team for review and analysis. This feedback will be used to understand community concerns and consider any suggestions for improvement, and to ensure that any necessary adjustments are incorporated into the FHA Revocation Assessment Study.

As outlined in the Basset Basin Fish Habitat Revocation Communication Engagement Plan, this feedback will be considered in close collaboration with representatives from the Department of Primary Industries (DPI). Together TMR and DPI will determine whether further targeted consultation is needed to address any significant unresolved issues. All interactions with DPI, the consideration of feedback, and any subsequent negotiations will be fully documented in a Targeted and Broader Community FHA Consultation Report. This report will be attached to the Revocation Assessment Study Report, which will accompany the formal application to amend the boundaries of the declared Bassett Basin FHA.

The collected data is provided in the following attachments:

- Export from Social Pinpoint (**Attachment 1**)
- Email submissions (**Attachment 2**)
- Social media comments (**Attachments 3 and 4**).

Specific public feedback for consideration:

- There is a strong emphasis on the need for ongoing monitoring of fish habitat and fish passage post construction.
- The area is situated directly adjacent to the Keeleys Road Wetlands, which includes intertidal areas and is mapped as a High Ecological Significance Wetland (Matters of State Environmental Significance) within the Great Barrier Reef Wetland Protection Area.
- Several submissions recommended consideration be extended beyond fish and aquatic species to include migratory shorebird species and their habitat needs.
- The potential for weed infestations, particularly leucaena, was raised as a concern that should be addressed as part of the project.
- The current compensation proposal does not adequately address a loss of function in the existing high-value habitat. Suggestions were made that compensation should extend beyond a simple land exchange to focus more on functional habitat protection and improvement.
- Specific recommendations put forward included fish stocking initiatives, installation of artificial fish habitat structures in the Pioneer River, and considering land buy-back programs.
- The proposal was acknowledged for its effort to align the Mackay Port Access Road with areas already disturbed by existing infrastructure, such as the QR Harbour Rail Line and Bayersville Landfill, thereby minimising additional environmental impact.
- Feedback also encouraged broader regional traffic considerations, particularly prioritising congestion points on the road network such as Mackay-Bucasia Road.
- NQBP expressed their appreciation for advancing the project, noting it will 'enhance the future efficiency, flexibility, and competitiveness of the Port.

- NQBP also highlighted the project's safety benefits, particularly through separating heavy vehicles from residential traffic and its capacity to support Road Train Type 1 vehicles for regional freight movements.

Key themes

Key themes that emerged from the community's feedback through the online engagement process about the proposed revocation of the FHA:

- loss of mangrove habitat – perceived reduction in fish nursery areas
- questions regarding adequacy of the quality of the proposed land compensation areas
- altered tidal flushing patterns
- fish passage continuity
- flood and storm surge risk and changes to flood patterns
- cumulative impacts of climate change – loss of vegetation that stores carbon in water and marine environments
- loss of habitat / impact to environment
- reservations regarding continued investment in infrastructure perceived to support fossil fuel usage
- need to protect these kinds of areas.

Community sentiment sample

"It is a shame that the road corridor runs through such pristine wetlands, but we remain hopeful that with proper management, a minimal construction footprint, and a robust long-term restoration project, the impacts on the Bassett Basin Fish Habitat Area can be kept to an absolute minimum. We look forward to collaborating with TMR to achieve these shared goals."

~ Community member

"The environmental impact on the local area, the flora and fauna far outweigh the need for Access all to save a few minutes."

~ Community member

"Our fish stocks are depleting rapidly, and we must preserve key areas like this to ensure species survival and the important role of fish in human diets."

~ Community member

"I oppose this project to remove protection of Declared Fish Habitat for the purposes of construction a road and bridge. Protected areas all over Australia are being destroyed when they should be preserved."

~ Community member

"It is internationally recognised that the global destruction of mangrove habitats is causing huge problems and that these crucial habitats should be protected."

~ Community member

Next Steps

To ensure the community's feedback is meaningfully considered, TMR and DPI will follow the steps below to assess the input, determine if further consultation is needed, and finalise the revocation proposal. These steps will directly inform the Revocation Assessment Study and support the formal application to amend the Fish Habitat Area (FHA) boundaries.

1. Review and summarise feedback

All feedback received will be carefully reviewed and summarised to ensure key insights and concerns are clearly understood. This summary will support a well-informed discussion with DPI representatives.

2. Work with DPI to decide on next steps

A meeting with DPI will be held to go over the feedback, decide if more targeted consultation is needed to resolve specific concerns, and identify where improvements to the proposal may be required.

3. Prepare the Consultation Report

All interactions with DPI, including the consideration of feedback, decisions made, and any negotiated changes will be documented in a Consultation Report. This report will be included as part of the Revocation Assessment Study.

4. Finalise the Revocation Assessment Study

The Revocation Assessment Study will be completed, reflecting the feedback and any updates to the proposal.

5. Submit the formal application

Once everything is finalised, a formal application will be submitted to request changes to the FHA boundaries.

Community sentiment sample

"This transport corridor will enhance the future efficiency, flexibility, and competitiveness of the Port. The proposed Port Access Road also includes safety benefits in terms of separating heavy vehicles from residential traffic and when developed will support regional access for Road Train Type 1 vehicles."
~ Community member

"While the current planning and engineering are likely the most economical design, it is imperative to consider a more robust engineering solution. Using pylons and bridging the affected mangrove area is a viable alternative."
~ Community member

"Just don't. You know their importance. Prioritise the environment, because you can."
~ Community member

Timeline

