

Noosa River Community Jury

Final Report
December 2015



The randomly selected Noosa River Community Jury was charged with providing recommendations on the following topic:

- How can we manage the Noosa River better?
- What role should Council play and what resources should Council apply?

Issues within the Jury's scope were:

- Anchoring, mooring and living on board watercraft in the Noosa River.
- Commercial use of the river and commercial Jetty Leases occupying the Noosaville foreshore.

Issues outside the Jury's scope were:

- Commercial and recreational fishing (this is a separate issue with the State Government currently running a State-wide review process).
- Riverbank erosion.
- Riverbank restoration.

The 24-member Jury met five times from August-December 2015, and at their final meeting reached the following conclusion and recommendations.

The Jury considered the proposition that Council should take over the authority and finances from the State Government for managing the moorings, anchoring, living on board and commercial use of the river on that basis that it would be a user pays system funded through alternative means to rates.

The Jury did not reach a consensus on this proposition, with 18 members in support the proposition and six members not in support of the proposition.

Those who supported the proposition viewed that:

- The State Government had been unable to do a good job managing the River.

- Any cost to Council could be offset by revenue.
- Bringing management of the River closer to Noosa would see it run better.

Those who did not support the proposition viewed that:

- Management would be too big an issue for Council.
- There may not be enough revenue to cover the costs to Council and that ratepayers should not have to pay higher rates.
- There was significant risk involved.
- It is a role that should be undertaken by State Government authorities.
- Noosa is a small community and should not have to take on this responsibility.
- The River is still one of the best in the country.

The Jury agreed to note both sets of views in this report.

The Jury did reach consensus on the following recommendations for Council to implement:

1. Review, update and implement the Noosa River Plan in a new framework and have it ratified with a formal status to ensure it has authority (recognising that is not currently a legal document). Ensure the Plan is clearly linked to relevant cultural, social and, transport strategies and plans.
2. Undertake effective monitoring and facilitation of waste removal/disposal, for example through use of rebates for compliance or outsourcing to a third party on a user pays basis.
3. Establish an effective duty of care (as per Cultural Heritage Act) with respect to sites of cultural heritage and ensure a specific policy or strategy on cultural matters including effective indigenous engagement on all aspects of river management.
4. Implement a role similar to a park ranger (for example a national park model) with authority on the river around compliance and monitoring.
5. Maintain present river catchment protections.
6. Review fees for moorings and anchoring noting the Jury's support for Council to levy rates for commercial jetties.
7. Lead the establishment of a Noosa River Management Coordination Committee to be chaired by an independent river management specialist to monitor and oversight river management.
8. Pursue legal authority to remove (following appropriate notification and legal requirements) abandoned, unattended, unauthorised, derelict and unsafe vessels from the river to an impound area, noting that there would then be an opportunity to auction unclaimed vessels.
9. Review mooring and anchor locations and type of moorings to take account of all relevant cultural and environmental factors, with new locations to be assessed against these factors on a rolling basis and made more environmentally friendly.

10. Pursue options to implement lighting and marker options for boats and beacons to address safety issues, noting relevant environmental and legal (national and international) parameters which must be considered.
11. Implement stricter management of acceptable commercial uses of river and assume control of commercial leases/uses on river including all recreational rentals, house boat rentals etc.
12. Determine a cap and locations (based on the Noosa River Plan evidence base) for live-a-boards allowing them to continue as long as they comply with guidelines, permits and operate on a user pays basis noting that failure to comply to result in lease being terminated.