

Finalised 23 June 2021

1.0 Introduction

The Noosa River is a valuable natural, social and economic asset to the people of the Noosa region and visitors alike. It is arguably south-east Queensland's only substantially natural major river system due to the considerable areas of remnant vegetation retained within the catchment, and it consistently achieves the highest ratings in South-East Queensland in Healthy Land & Water's Ecosystem Health Monitoring Program. It also has concentrated areas of tourism, fishing and recreational activity on its lower reaches and provides general public amenity and enjoyment across its whole length. The Noosa community have a deep understanding of the Noosa River and its catchment, shaped by decades of experience, and a shared interest in addressing and alleviating the pressures facing this highly-valued ecosystem, to ensure the intrinsic values of the Noosa River and its catchment remain.

The Noosa River is a complex waterway and management of this dynamic system involves multiple agencies across all three tiers of government (Local, State and Commonwealth) in managing different locations, impacts and activities on the river. With that understanding, the local Noosa Shire Council (Noosa Council), and the State regulatory agency for coastal waters of Queensland, Maritime Safety Queensland (MSQ), have committed as co-chairs to a Noosa River Stakeholder Advisory Committee (NRSAC) with an aim to engage with local stakeholders and communities as an essential component in the management of the Noosa River and its catchment.

More information about the Noosa River and its catchment can be found at <https://www.noosa.qld.gov.au/environment-waste/environment/rivers-creeks>.

2.0 Purpose

The Noosa River Stakeholder Advisory Committee (NRSAC) has been formed with key community representatives across sectors of river use including community, recreational, fishing, tourism and environmental.

The purpose of NRSAC is to provide advice to Noosa Council and MSQ on sustainable use and management of the Noosa River and its catchment.

NRSAC is not a decision-making body. Advice and recommendations provided by NRSAC to relevant management agencies are non-binding.

3.0 Objectives

The objectives of the NRSAC are:

- Prioritise issues impacting upon the Noosa River and catchment
- Analyse problems and consider solutions including Initiation of ideas
- Consider recommendations prepared by Noosa Council and MSQ and provide feedback
- Support informed discussion and consultation within the community at appropriate times
- Consider the long term best practice governance for the Noosa River and its catchment including clear vision and goals
- Ensure the local Kabi Kabi (Gubbi Gubbi) are effectively engaged and bring a First Nations perspective to ongoing management of the Noosa River and its catchment

It is considered that initially the group will focus on operational issues and priorities immediately apparent in the Noosa River and its catchment, with parallel exploration and discussion on the broader vision and goals, and longer term best practice governance arrangements.

4.0 Accountability of Noosa Council and MSQ

As noted above, NRSAC is not a decision-making body. Advice and recommendations provided by NRSAC to relevant management agencies are non-binding. However Noosa Council and MSQ are committed to outcomes from the NRSAC meetings. This includes:

- Commitment to take recommendations from the NRSAC to the Noosa Council and MSQ
- Feedback loop and progress reporting on initiatives at the NRSAC meetings

5.0 Noosa River Stakeholder Advisory Committee Participants

Chair

The NRSAC will be co-chaired by a senior officer of Noosa Council and MSQ. The Noosa Council Chief Executive Officer will appoint an officer to sit as the Noosa Council Chair. MSQ's General Manager, or their nominated representative, will have responsibility for the role of Chair.

Noosa Council will chair and lead discussion on catchment-related issues such as:

- Water quality monitoring, research and biodiversity in the river system
- Riparian management, specifically vegetation
- Land-based inputs into the river, such as pollution and sediment
- Stormwater management.

MSQ will chair and lead discussion on issues related to the Noosa River management within the coastal waters of Queensland:

- Recreational boating users of the river
- Boating safety related matters of the river
- Ship-sourced marine pollution
- Day-to-day management of maritime activities on the river
- Boating Infrastructure.

For activities that are not within the remit of either agency, the Chairs will liaise with and invite, where necessary:

- representatives of relevant Queensland Government management agencies, such as Queensland Water Police, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy, Department of Environment and Science, Australian Maritime Safety Authority
- Noosa Council technical representatives of relevant functional areas.

Once the NRSAC is effectively functioning and at a time agreed by Noosa Council and MSQ, a Chair may be selected from the community stakeholders, if a majority of members support this. Election of Chairs other than Council and MSQ representatives, will be conducted by Noosa Council and MSQ through a nomination and voting process of committee members.

Committee Members

The committee selection process is outlined in **Appendix 1**.

Committee members shall contribute actively and positively to NRSAC and commit to attendance at meetings.

Committee members shall commit to the Code of Conduct contained in **Appendix 2**.

Management of Conflict of Interest

It is expected that members of NRSAC will have specific interests in aspects of river management and this will not preclude them from participating in discussions on key topics. However, a member who has a direct or indirect financial and/or non-financial interest or a real, perceived or potential conflict of interest in a matter that could be considered by that Committee, or with MSQ or Noosa Council, shall disclose that interest upon acceptance of membership.

As a standing committee member, a conflict of interest may arise when a Committee Member is influenced, or appears to be influenced, by personal interests. The perception of a conflict of interest can be as damaging as an actual conflict because it may undermine public confidence in the integrity of the Committee and its members.

- Members will avoid any conflict of interest and will not allow personal interest or the interests of any particular person, group or association to conflict with their role as a Committee Member.
- A declaration of a conflict of interest can occur before a meeting for a determination.
- Where a conflict of interest arises at a meeting, a member shall declare such conflict.
- Where a conflict of interest is declared at a meeting, the co-Chairs will decide whether the member should withdraw from the meeting while the matter is discussed.

To assist in management of conflicts, a register of interests shall be collated with the assistance of committee members, and distributed at each meeting for transparency of all.

Term

The NRSAC will convene for two years initially, and members will be appointed for this term. At the end of two years, the NRSAC membership will review the Terms of Reference to ensure it is meeting its stated objective and amend as necessary.

NSC and MSQ co-chairs may terminate an individual's membership of the NRSAC at any time if they breach the 'Code of Conduct'. The Code of Conduct is contained in Appendix 2.

Proxies

An NRSAC member may seek prior approval of the Chair to appoint a proxy to represent them at a meeting in their absence. In considering the request the Chair will consider:

- The relevant experience of the proxy
- Whether the proxy has been adequately briefed and informed on the topic
- Need for meeting continuity and prevention of meeting disruption

Observers

On occasion, external stakeholders may have an interest in an item on the agenda or a member may wish to bring a guest to a meeting. Observers are welcome to attend meetings with the approval of the Chair provided in writing prior to the meeting. The Chair should consider the content of the meeting before granting (or possibly refusing) permission.

Noosa Council Mayor or the Queensland Government Member for Noosa may forward items to the co-chairs for discussion and/or attend meetings as an observer.

Indigenous Representation

The Chairs will continue to seek the local Kabi Kabi (Gubbi Gubbi) are effectively engaged to bring a First Nations perspective to ongoing management of the Noosa River and its catchment, including attendance of a representative at meetings

Presenters

The NRSAC may request a presentation at a meeting from an expert or an organisation to learn more about a specific issue. Suggestions for presentations should come from, and be agreed by, members of the NRSAC. The presenter should provide a copy of their presentation to be circulated with the meeting minutes.

Resignation

NRSAC members may resign at any time by writing to the co-chairs NSC/MSQ (a letter or an email is acceptable).

It is noted that Members are expected to prioritise personal attendance at NRSAC meetings. If a member misses three consecutive meetings, they will be deemed to have resigned during the term.

Casual Appointments

In the event of departure of a selected member, Noosa Council and MSQ in consultation with an appointed Chair, may consider the appointment of casual members taking into account:

- The that other members may already provide sufficient representation
- Disruption to functioning the committee
- Experience and quality of any replacement candidates

The Chair may also appoint an additional indigenous representative if a candidate becomes available.

6.0 NRSAC Meetings

Meeting Frequency

The NRSAC will meet a minimum of 4-5 times per year, approximately every two months outside of the key visitation period (November to January). An annual calendar for the year will be prepared and distributed to members prior to the end of the preceding calendar year.

Additional meetings may be convened by the Chair to discuss a pressing matter. In recognition of the potential inability for members to attend at short notice, no vote will be undertaken at one of these meetings.

Meeting Agenda

The Chair of the meeting will prepare and distribute the Agenda taking into account:

- Priority topics
- Updates from Working Groups
- Correspondence from Community in relation to the river
- Requests for agenda items raised by Committee members

General business will be a standing item at each meeting, but the ability to respond to issues raised will be determined by available time.

The Agenda will be circulated to NRSAC members at least one week prior to the meeting.

Voting

It is the intent of NRSAC to achieve consensus wherever possible on matters being considered by the Committee.

Voting would be anticipated in the following circumstances:

- Endorsement of the draft minutes
- Where the Chair seeks indication of support on an item for discussion, and consensus is not clear

When a vote is conducted, the decision will be recorded as unanimous support, majority support or not supported due to a range of different views.

Each member present is entitled to one vote however they may choose to abstain.

Subcommittee Groups

A subcommittee of NRSAC members can be formed to address specific issues, at the approval of NRSAC.

Once formed, the subcommittee can decide how often it meets and appointment of a “chair” or “spokesperson”. The general NRSAC meeting should be addressed by the spokesperson from the working group to keep members updated on its progress

The subcommittee will:

- Meet out of session to the formal NRSAC meeting to discuss topics in detail
- The subcommittee tackles topics in succession, ideally with a program of topics for the next 12 months
- members can opt in or opt out at any time dependent upon the topic of interest

The subcommittee is to operate to be inclusive of all NRSAC members, and all members are welcome to participate in a sub-committee. When meeting notes and a working drafts in response to a specific issue are prepared they are to be sent to all NRSAC members for review and consideration.

To be explicit, the subcommittees do not operate with delegations – all matters will need to come back to the full NRSAC committee for consideration and formal endorsement.

A subcommittee may seek broader advice from members of the community to bring back to the NRSAC, where it will enhance considerations on the topic.

Note: when the Terms of Reference were endorsed at the 23 June 2021 meeting, it was noted the proposed “single” subcommittee composition as outlined above was appropriate for the forthcoming period of NRSAC with a focus on priority topics. Moving forward members reserved the right to review the Terms of Reference and subcommittee composition if required.

Minutes

All minutes from meetings of the NRSAC shall be made public on the Noosa Council website.

7.0 Public Communication and Media

The NRSAC may be involved with sensitive topics and information. Members are to ensure discretion and confidentiality with information in accordance with the Code of Conduct in **Appendix 2**.

The Chair/s of the NRSAC is the official appointed media spokespersons for the committee and requests for media comments should be directed through that role. The Chairs will liaise with Sub committee spokespersons for collaborative statements on specific topics.

Media releases may be published to provide intermittent updates on progress and key milestones achieved.

Programs supported by NRSAC, and subsequently formally endorsed by Noosa Council and MSQ, may require broader and more formalised community consultation programs. Noosa Council and MSQ may seek the assistance of committee members in their consultation programs.

Appendix 1: Committee Selection

Stakeholder Representation

The NRSAC aims to achieve diverse representation across the community and stakeholders by providing for specific user group and interests to be represented. The NRSAC will consist of up to 14 stakeholders from local river user sectors and groups and ideally should include at least one member with demonstrated knowledge and community connections in the following sectors:

- Commercial and recreational fishing
- Commercial and recreational boating
- Conservation and Natural Resource Management
- Commercial operators on the river
- Tourism
- Traditional owners/Indigenous community (Kabi Kabi)

Selection Process

Noosa Council and MSQ will jointly co-ordinate a process of public advertisement, review of Expressions of Interest and appointment for up to fourteen (14 representatives).

Selection will be based on the following criteria:

- Individual knowledge and experience in management issues associated with the Noosa River and its catchment.
- Ability to represent community interests and communicate to as many members as possible in identified community sectors.

Appointments will be approved by Noosa Council and MSQ

Appendix 2 – Code of Conduct

The code of conduct outlines the standards of conduct expected from NRSAC participants.

The Code of Conduct requires that all NRSAC participants:

- behave honestly and with integrity during all NRSAC business
- act with care and diligence
- treat everyone respectfully and professionally, and without harassment
- comply with all applicable Australian laws for code of conduct
- not provide false or misleading information in response to a request for information
- fail to adequately declare conflict of interest prior to participation in discussions and decisions
- not make improper use of:
 - NRSAC information
 - NRSAC resources
 - the NRSAC duties, status, power or authority, in order to gain, or seek to gain, a benefit or advantage for the participant or for any other person.

Members will prioritise personal attendance at NRSAC meetings. If a member misses three consecutive meetings, they will be deemed to have resigned during the term.