

Blueprint for a Sustainable Moreton Bay

for people and nature (2025-2035)



The Moreton Bay
Foundation



EcoFutures



MOSAIC
insights



Natural Capital
Economics

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

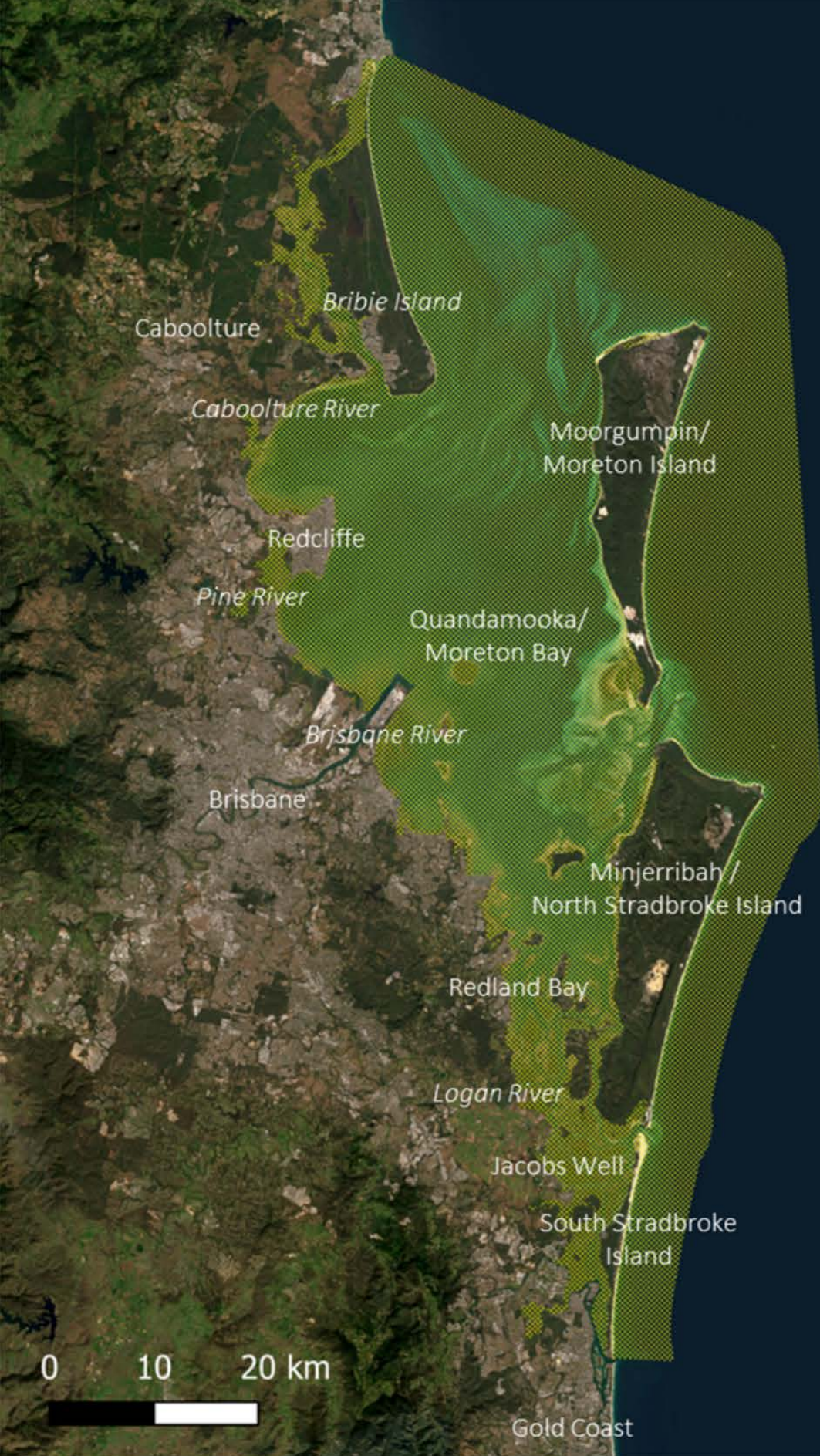
Moreton Bay is a unique natural environment, home to abundant biodiversity and internationally important land and seascapes which contribute significantly to the livelihoods and well-being of communities across Southeast Queensland. Protecting and enhancing our Bay is critical over the coming decade as we face unprecedented challenges due to rapid population growth and climate change.

The Moreton Bay Foundation (TMBF) has commissioned this Blueprint to identify gaps in current legislation, policy, and management, and barriers to sustainability, and to recommend priority programs and actions to address these gaps and enable more effective and efficient management for sustainability of the Bay over the next decade.

This Blueprint is intended to work alongside existing plans and strategies relevant to the Bay, yet provide an additional complementary, integrated approach to effective action at a Bay-wide scale.

This Blueprint covers an area of oceans and coasts for which First Nations have an unbroken connection. The Quandamooka, Kabi Kabi and Kombumerri / Yugambah peoples hold rights and interests in all aspects of management, use and enjoyment of these Sea Countries.







Recognising that First Nations have strategic goals that reflect their long-term past, present and future custodianship of Sea Country, the document is situated within these, and is grounded with an underpinning principle that the recommendations within this report are developed and delivered in collaborative partnership with First Nations people and organisations.



Extent of Moreton Bay for this Blueprint, with the seaward boundary aligned with the Moreton Bay Marine Park (yellow lined area), and the landward boundary extending slightly inland of the highest tide boundary.

KEY VALUES OF MORETON BAY

identified through a review of existing plans and strategies

Value Themes	Description
 <p>Resilient natural & unique ecosystem</p>	<p>The Bay is valued as a natural, unique and biodiverse ecosystem. The Bay includes one of the most extensive intertidal areas of seagrass, mangrove and saltmarsh communities on the eastern coast of Australia, and is valuable for supporting fisheries resources, waterbirds (Ramsar) and marine megafauna of conservation significance.</p>
 <p>Coastal Living</p>	<p>A healthy Moreton Bay offers significant benefits to communities living along its coastline. There is the physical appeal and natural beauty of the Bay that is highly valued by many. There is also the benefit of protection of housing and infrastructure from storm tides, erosion and tidal inundation.</p>
 <p>Traditional Owner Cultural Values</p>	<p>Natural and cultural resources of Quandamooka Country are fundamental to continuing Quandamooka's living culture and supporting a vibrant, thriving economy and healthy community. First Nations people in SEQ have an intrinsic connection to the land and water, grounded deeply in their cultural, spiritual and historical identity. Dispossession and rapid urban development have broken their engagement with sea country, restricting their cultural practices and decision-making power. This has led to changed ecosystems, loss of traditional knowledge and impacts on sites of cultural importance. This study is an opportunity to collaborate with First Nations people to increase their participation in and the incorporation of their traditional knowledge and practices into sea country management in SEQ. A priority for community is to care for the natural environment on Country and to gather, sustain, share and grow the Quandamooka cultural knowledge and identity.</p>
 <p>Community Connection and Stewardship</p>	<p>Communities value the Bay through a connection with this natural space, feeling an emotional bond. It is valued for the contribution to wellbeing and sense of identity for individuals and the local community. For Traditional Owners the Bay holds spiritual and cultural significance, representing ancestral connections and traditional practices. The Bay is also valued as a place of exploration, discovery, and learning. Communities who are connected with natural spaces have a heightened sense of its value and increased stewardship towards its protection. Here we define stewardship as: the willingness and capacity for "individuals, organisations and industry to actively manage and value the Bay; to remove, avoid or minimise negative impacts and proactively restore or conserve ecological health of associated waterways, wetlands and aquatic and marine environments".</p>
 <p>Sustainable use of ecosystems</p>	<p>Sustainably managing and 'using' the Bay's resources is critical for the protection of the social, economic, and cultural values that it provides. This is especially important as the population of SEQ quickly rises and old use and management patterns and practices cannot be sustained. Traditional-owners have long standing spiritual and cultural obligations and tradition law and customs in respect to lands and waters, and the protection and sustainable use of the natural resources is highly valued.</p>
 <p>Access & Recreation</p>	<p>Access to the Bay is a strong lifestyle value for the local community, including recreational fishing, boating, swimming, walking, enjoying nature and spending time with friends and family. Access and some forms of recreation can lead to unsustainable use; however access and recreation is also positive for creating community connection and stewardship towards environmental protection.</p>

KEY THREATS TO MORETON BAY

Threat theme	Description
Pollutants	Catchment-derived pollutants are one of the most significant threats to the values of the Bay. Sediment smothers coastal habitats like seagrasses, shellfish and coral reefs and sandy intertidal zones and creating poor water quality that impacts the types of plants and animals that can inhabit the Bay, as well as impacting the amenity and tourism values of the Bay. Nutrients and toxicants change the productivity of the Bay's ecosystem and have been linked to algal blooms and fish kills. Pollutants come from both point sources (e.g. wastewater discharge locations) and diffuse sources (e.g. catchment erosion, urban stormwater runoff)
Ecosystem Modification	Changes to habitat extent, the introduction of pests and weeds and intensifying coastal erosion are modifying how the Bay's ecosystems function, reducing their ability to recover from extreme events like flooding.
Climate Change	Increasing sea levels and sea temperatures are likely to increase coastal erosion and damaged or destroy the habitats in the Bay as well as their biodiversity. Increasing extreme events like more intense and regular flooding will further exacerbate current impacts of catchment run off.
Population Growth	SEQ is one of the fastest growing regions in Australia with an expected increase of 2.2 million by 2046 people. Subsequent development and urbanisation along the coast is likely to lead to more artificial coastlines and recreation and commercial activity in the Bay, increasing disturbances to flora and fauna and use of the Bay's natural resources.
Stewardship	Social research suggests that perceived community apathy or lack of knowledge of the Bay's unique values is a major barrier to legislative change or increased funding for restoration or protection activities in the Bay.
Research and Development	A lack of data or knowledge poses a significant threat to the management of many of the Bay's values. In many cases, the condition or trend of values are unknown, poorly understood, or the data is not widely available to the Bay's stakeholders and management organisations.

CONDITION OF BAY VALUES

CONDITION & TREND KEY: U = unknown, G = good, F = fair, P = poor; D = declining, S = stable

THREATS KEY: I = increasing; ● = current threat, ○ = future threat, ⊙ = both current & future threat; E=ecology/behaviour unknown, M=monitoring absent/minimal, T= future trends uncertain;

MANAGEMENT KEY: | = <20%, || = 20-40%, ||| = >40%; N=none; M=mention, P= protection explicitly in legislation

VALUES ASSESSMENT				THREATS													MANAGEMENT											
Value theme	Value	Condition	Trend	POLLUTANTS				ECOSYSTEM MODIFICATION				CLIMATE			POP. GROWTH			STEWARDSHIP			R&D							
				Catchment runoff – nutrient, toxicants	Catchment runoff - sediments	Current Water quality	Litter / microplastics	Coastal erosion	Weeds / pests / disease / algal blooms	Habitat area width / extent decline	Fragmentation/ habitat connectivity	Sea level rise	Temperature increases	Rainfall/extreme events / flooding	Coastal development / artificial coastlines	Human & dom. animal disturb / overuse	Harvesting / overfishing / extraction	Low community connection	Low community awareness	Low community stewardship	Lack of data/knowledge	Prioritised in other strategies/plans	Confirmed by stakeholders as priority	Protected explicitly in legislation				
Resilience natural & unique ecosystem	Marine turtles	U	U				●	●	●	●			○	○	⊙	⊙	⊙							T			P	
	Shorebirds	F to G	D				●	○		⊙	●			○		○	⊙	⊙	●	●	●					P		
	Marine mammals	U	U				●		●	⊙					⊙	⊙			●				EMT			P		
	IUCN listed species	U	U				●	⊙		⊙	⊙			○	○	⊙	⊙	⊙		●	●			EMT			P	
	Fish communities	G	S			●	●		●	○	●			○	○	⊙	●		⊙					ET			P	
	Open coastline (headlands, beaches, dunes)	U	D					●	●	●	●			○			●	●			●	●			EMT			M
	Mangroves	G	I					●	●		●			○		○	⊙	⊙		●	●	●			T			P
	Saltmarsh	P	D					●	●	●	●			○	○	○	⊙	●		●	●	●			T			P
	Seagrass	F	variable	●	●	●		●	●	●	●			○	○	○									T			P
	Mudflats	G	S				○		●																		N	
Coastal living	Natural beauty (including scenic amenity, water quality)	F	U	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			○		○	●				●				EMT			P	
	Coastal community protection (flooding, storm tide, erosion, sea level rise)	G	D					●		●				○		⊙	⊙			⊙	⊙					N		

CONDITION OF BAY VALUES (CONT)

CONDITION & TREND KEY: U = unknown, G = good, F = fair, P = poor; D = declining, S = stable

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VALUES ASSESSMENT				THREATS													MANAGEMENT									
Value theme	Value	Condition	Trend	POLLUTANTS				ECOSYSTEM MODIFICATION				CLIMATE			POP. GROWTH			STEWARDSHIP			R&D					
				Catchment runoff – nutrient, toxicants	Catchment runoff - sediments	Current Water quality	Litter / microplastics	Coastal erosion	Weeds / pests / disease / algal blooms	Habitat area width / extent decline	Fragmentation/ habitat connectivity	Sea level rise	Temperature increases	Rainfall/extreme events / flooding	Coastal development / artificial coastlines	Human & dom. animal disturb / overuse	Harvesting / overfishing / extraction	Low community connection	Low community awareness	Low community stewardship	Lack of data/knowledge	Prioritised in other strategies/plans	Confirmed by stakeholders as priority	Protected explicitly in legislation		
Traditional Owner cultural values	Cultural heritage, Quandamooka cultural knowledge, traditional hunting resources, access to undertake cultural & spiritual activities ¹	Not rated	Not rated					⊙	●	●				○	⊙	⊙	⊙	●	●	●	T			P		
Community connection & stewardship	Community connection	F	S	●	●	●	●	⊙	⊙	○						○	○	○	●	●	●				N	
	Community stewardship	U	S	●	●	●	●									○	○	○	●	●	●				N	
	Wellbeing & identity	U	U	●	●	●	●									○	○	○	●	●					N	
	Exploration, discovery for young people	P	S	●	●	●	●			○						○	○		●	●	●				N	
Sustainable use of ecosystems	Fisheries	G	U					⊙	⊙	●	●					●	●	●	●	T			P			
	Eco-tourism	F	I	●	●	●	●	●	○						○	⊙	●			●	●					N
	Water treatment cycle	F	S	⊙		●				●				○	○	○				●	●	●	T			P
Access & recreation	Recreational fishing, boating, snorkelling	G	D							○	○				○		○		⊙	⊙	EMT			N		
	Swimming	variable	S	●	●	●	●	○	●						○	⊙	○	○		●	●	●	MT			N
	Nature-based experiences	G	U	●	●	●	●			○	○				○		○				EMT			N		

¹ As reported in: Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation. (2022). QYAC Strategic Plan 2022-2026. Available at: http://www.qyac.net.au/docs/QYAC_Strategic_Plan_2022-2026.pdf

CONDITION OF BAY VALUES (CONT)

Categories used to describe the condition and trend of each value

Status of condition / trend in condition category	Description of category
Unknown or no data	Where no data is available and/or no baseline information is available to determine current condition or trend in condition.
Poor / declining	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Condition of the value is much lower than its reference condition or benchmark.• The value delivers limited ecosystem services. For example, modified and disturbed ecosystem that does not resemble pre-disturbance structure and function.• Condition is declining from a defined baseline or from any previous assessments.
Fair / stable	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The condition of the value is between degraded and reference condition or benchmark.• The values deliver some ecosystem services but are likely to be variable over time. For example, modified and disturbed ecosystems that have limited elements that resemble pre-disturbance structure and function.• Condition is not changing (neither improving or declining) from defined baseline or from previous assessments.
Good / improving	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The value is in a similar condition to reference or benchmarks.• The values deliver the majority of ecosystems services expected. For example, ecosystem may be disturbed and slightly modified but still resembles remnant ecosystems in structure and has many of the same ecological functions.• Condition is improving from a defined baseline or from previous assessments.

RECOMMENDED PROGRAMS AND ACTIONS

Program	Actions
Program 1. Protecting coastal habitats	<p>Action 1.1 Develop a regional prioritisation for coastal habitat locations that require enhancement, protection or coastal hazard mitigation</p> <p>Action 1.2 Identify and confirm specific legislative enhancements required to allow for the protection and enhancements of coastal habitats</p> <p>Action 1.3 Advocate for enhanced state legislation to improve regional protection and management of prioritised coastal habitat locations in the Bay</p> <p>Action 1.4 Advocate for improved management of roosting and feeding sites for migratory shorebirds</p> <p>Action 1.5 Develop an education campaign with a focus on the threats and responses to coastal zones and habitats from sea level rise, storm surge, flooding and extreme events</p>
Program 2. Identifying priorities and requirements for degraded habitats	<p>Action 2.1 Advocacy for new guidelines for habitat restoration to accompany key legislation like the Marine Parks Act 2004</p> <p>Action 2.2 Develop a Bay-wide habitat restoration strategy and prioritisation for priority habitat: shellfish reefs, corals reefs and seagrass</p> <p>Action 2.3 Conduct research and trials into restoration of priority habitat: seagrass</p> <p>Action 2.4 Conduct research and trials into restoration of priority habitat: coral reefs</p>
Program 3. Knowledge exchange and stakeholder coordination	<p>Action 3.1 Create and resource ongoing partnership position/s within First Nations organisations to interface with SEQ-wide non-governmental agencies</p> <p>Action 3.2 Develop and maintain a centralised knowledge hub or portal for Moreton Bay</p> <p>Action 3.3 Establish a regular Bay-wide stakeholders forum</p>
Program 4. Increasing catchment sediment reduction at a Bay-wide scale	<p>Action 4.1 Develop business case for catchment sediment reduction at a regional scale</p> <p>Action 4.2 Develop regional prioritisation of sediment reduction projects</p> <p>Action 4.3 Develop an education campaign about the threats of sediments on Moreton Bay</p> <p>Action 4.4 Advocate for enhanced sediment reduction legislation to underpin regional program of sediment reduction program</p>

RECOMMENDED PROGRAMS AND ACTIONS (CONT)

Program	Actions
Program 5. Managing recreation use to maintain Bay values	<p>Action 5.1 Targeted research to understand impacts and benefits of high use spots around the Bay</p> <p>Action 5.2 Education campaign for sustainable recreational use</p> <p>Action 5.3 Coordinate research and support the protection and improvement of scenic amenity and nature-based experiences in the Bay</p> <p>Action 5.4 Establish partnerships to coordinate the management of locations of high value to the tourism industry</p>
Program 6. Strengthening community connection with Moreton Bay	<p>Action 6.1 Develop an education and engagement campaign that showcases the Bay's values and unique ecosystems</p> <p>Action 6.2 Develop an education program that integrates with the primary and secondary school curriculum</p> <p>Action 6.3 Research to identify opportunities to strengthen community connection to the Bay</p>
Program 7. Refining legislation to better align with outcomes for Bay values	<p>Action 7.1 Research to identify best practice regulatory, policy and strategic frameworks.</p> <p>Action 7.2 Advocate for refinements and updates to key legislation.</p> <p>Action 7.3 Targeted research to understand impacts of water quality objectives, stormwater quality objectives on the biodiversity values of the Bay.</p> <p>Action 7.4 Develop a whole of catchment prioritisation to identify suitable locations for point source management projects through the offset policy.</p>
Program 8. Ecological monitoring and evaluation	<p>Action 8.1 Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework to support the management of key values and threats</p> <p>Action 8.2 Implement a coordinated monitoring and evaluation framework to support the management of key values and threats</p>
Program 9. Climate risk and vulnerability assessment	<p>Action 9.1 Climate change vulnerability/risk assessment for whole-of-Bay</p>



ABOUT THE MORETON BAY FOUNDATION

The Moreton Bay Foundation (TMBF)'s mission is to enable action for Moreton Bay's sustainable future, through leadership, partnership, and knowledge.

We facilitate collaborative effort and the generation, application and sharing of knowledge to contribute to an aware, engaged community committed to the conservation of Moreton Bay.

Since our inception, we've funded nine important research and projects with direct implications on the health and/or sustainable management of the Bay. Our outcomes-focused support for research and projects aids in protecting our marine life and our social and economic values.

TMBF leverages investment from members and donors to drive leadership, knowledge and partnerships which support robust, informed decision-making for the sustainability of the Bay for people and nature.

To find out more about what we do, donate or become a member, please visit <https://moretonbayfoundation.org>



Full report and
summary documents

*Blueprint for a sustainable Moreton Bay for
people and nature (2025-2035)*

For more information about this report, or to
arrange a briefing, please contact
community@moretonbayfoundation.org



The Moreton Bay Foundation



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