

# Great Sandy Marine Park Zoning Plan

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REVIEW OUTCOMES

**JULY 2023**

# INTRODUCTION

The Great Sandy Marine Park is a multiple use marine park established in 2006 to protect its significant natural and cultural values while providing opportunities for a range of different uses.

The marine park is located in the Wide Bay-Burnett Region and extends from Double Island Point in the south to Baffle Creek in the north. The marine park covers an area of approximately 6,000 square kilometres including the waters of Hervey Bay, Great Sandy Strait, Tin Can Inlet and the waters off the east coast of K'gari, seaward to the extent of Queensland state waters (generally three nautical miles).

The Great Sandy Marine Park surrounds the K'gari (Fraser Island) World Heritage Area and is an area of exceptionally high natural and cultural value, which includes:

- culturally and spiritually significant sea Country for the Bailai (Byellee), Gurang, Gooreng Gooreng, Taribelang Bunda, Butchulla and Kabi Kabi First Nations peoples.
- Great Sandy Strait—a Ramsar Wetland of International Significance
- species of international and national significance—marine turtles, dugongs, grey nurse sharks, humpback whales, Australian humpback dolphins and migratory shorebirds
- key fish habitats supporting the state's recreational and commercial fisheries



Culturally significant sea Country



**22**  
Threatened species



**23**  
Habitat types



**2**  
Areas of international significance



**11**  
Declared Fish Habitat Areas

*The primary purpose of a marine park is to conserve the state's marine environment while providing opportunities for a range of sustainable uses by the community.*



Each marine park in Queensland has a zoning plan that outlines the rules to manage the multiple uses that occur within its boundary and defines the locations of different zones which in turn provide for different levels of protection and different uses.

In 2017, the marine park's zoning plan was remade 'as is' to allow for a comprehensive review to ensure its values continue to be protected in the future.

## The need for change

Globally, marine biodiversity is under threat from a range of factors including climate change, population growth, pollution and increasing use. The Great Sandy Marine Park is being impacted by these global trends.

The Great Sandy Marine Park:

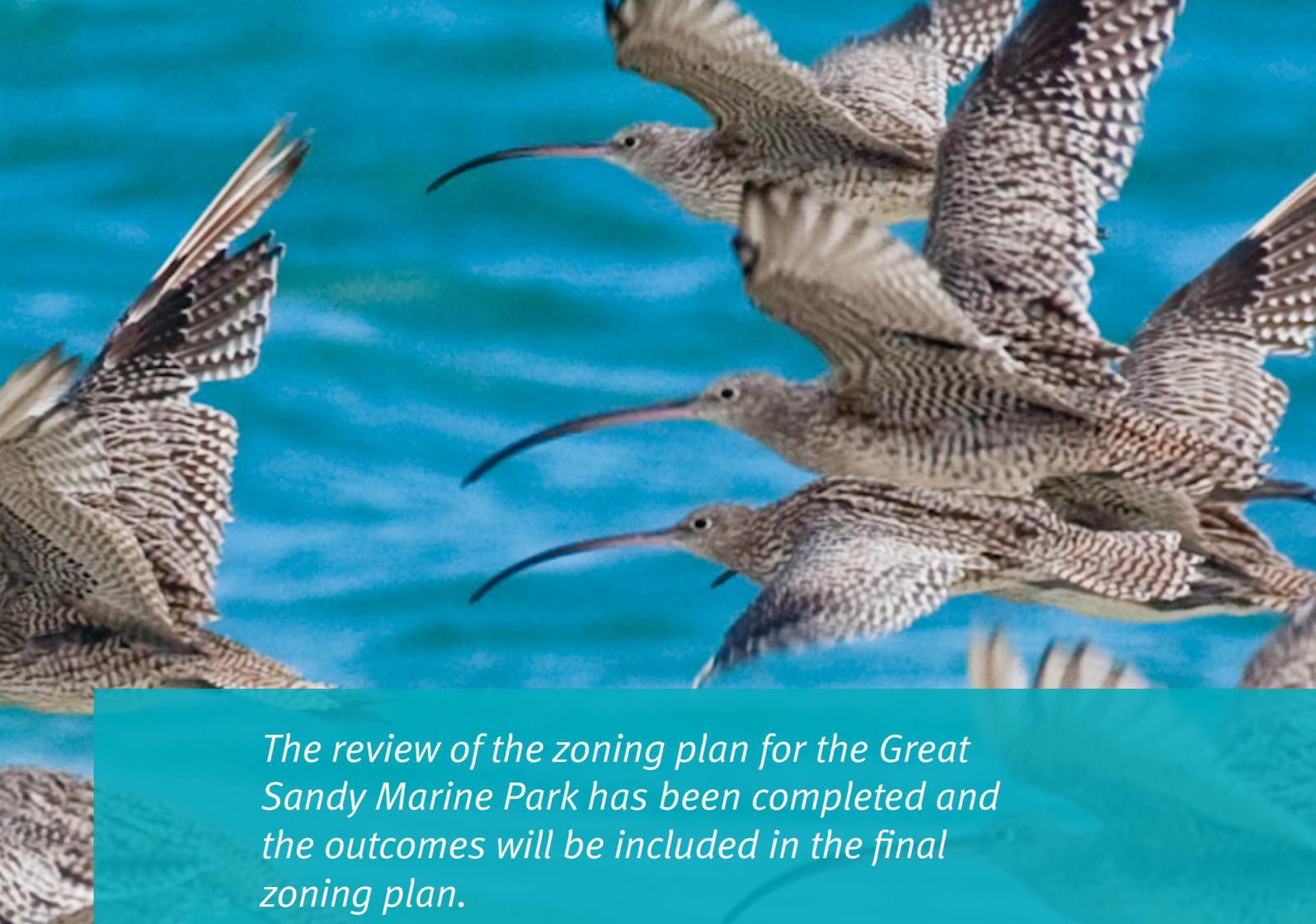
- boasts 23 broad habitat types, however several of these are under-represented in the highly protected zones of the existing zoning plan, placing the marine park's biodiversity and critical species at risk
- has seen a significant decrease in its extent of seagrass habitat
- is seeing a significant increase in mature marine turtle and dugong strandings resulting from a range of causes including boat strike, poor health and flooding
- includes the only known gestation site on the east coast of Australia for the critically endangered grey nurse shark, however the existing zoning plan does not effectively protect sharks at this key aggregation site from being hooked or accidentally caught by recreational and commercial line fishers
- is seeing a decrease in the numbers of many migratory shorebird species, some by more than 10% per year
- is subject to increasing coastal impacts from severe weather events caused by climate change
- is subject to a range of demands from competing uses.

Changes need to be made to the Great Sandy Marine Park zoning plan in order to address threats to the long-term conservation of wildlife and their habitats and preserve and enhance the region's lifestyle and economic strengths.

## The opportunity

The review of the zoning plan has provided the opportunity to assess and consider actions to:

- **better protect cultural values, respect and recognise** First Nations peoples' native title rights and responsibilities for caring for their sea Country
- **improve biodiversity and provide better protection of several iconic and threatened species**, which are significant nationally and internationally including whales, dolphins, dugongs, turtles, grey nurse sharks and shorebirds
- **largely maintain the use of the marine park by the commercial trawl, crab, line and harvest fisheries**, and those components of the net fishery that are of a lesser risk to threatened species.
- **enhance the region's enviable nature-based and recreational fishing lifestyle**
- **support future economic growth** in the region based on nature-based tourism, recreational and charter fishing and, where appropriate, aquaculture
- **assist local councils to address coastal impacts of climate change**
- **better reflect the community's aspirations** for the marine park.

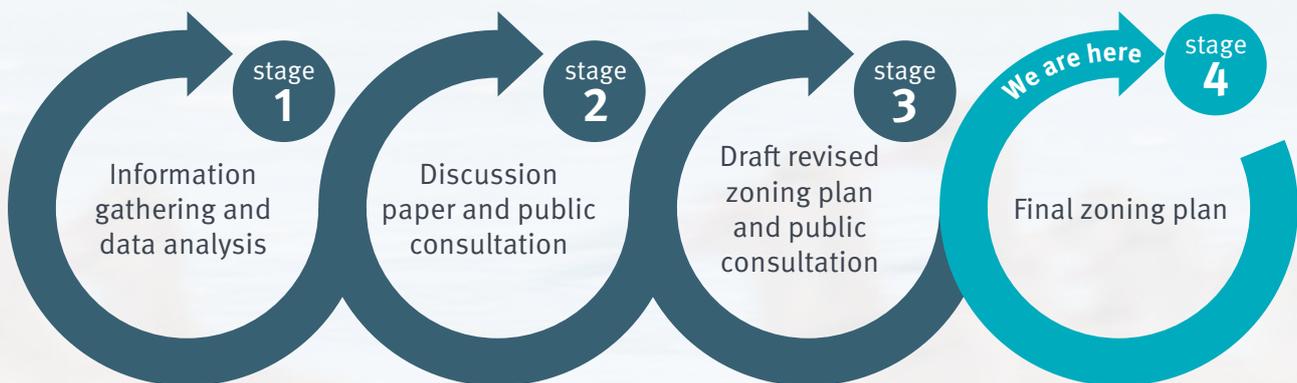


*The review of the zoning plan for the Great Sandy Marine Park has been completed and the outcomes will be included in the final zoning plan.*

## Zoning Plan review process

A four-stage process:

- Stage 1:** Information gathered about the conservation, social, cultural and economic values of the marine park.
- Stage 2:** A discussion paper released for public feedback on the management of the marine park.
- Stage 3:** A draft zoning plan and associated Regulatory Impact Statement released for further consultation and feedback in September-October 2022.
- Stage 4:** Informed by feedback from the consultation, legislation reflecting the outcomes of the review prepared. The new legislation will take effect at a nominated date in 2024 following implementation of impact mitigation processes.



# CONSULTATION

Since 2019, the Department of Environment and Science (DES) has undertaken extensive consultation with the community, First Nations peoples, local councils, scientists and key stakeholder groups on the zoning arrangements in the marine park.

Between 23 September and 23 October 2022, a draft zoning plan and associated Regulatory Impact Statement was released for broad public consultation and feedback.

Stakeholders and the community were invited to have their say on how well the proposed changes would conserve and manage the marine park and/or affect them, via an online survey or by submitting their feedback in writing. The online survey targeted the following key topics relating to the marine park:

- Habitat protection
- The designated Great Sandy Area and commercial fishing
- Recreational fishing
- Protecting threatened species
- Coastal management
- Protecting cultural values
- Platypus Bay

The draft zoning plan and Consultation Regulatory Impact Statement is available for reference at [www.qld.gov.au/greatsandymarinepark](http://www.qld.gov.au/greatsandymarinepark)

*Information about the draft zoning plan was distributed via traditional media, social media, newspaper and online advertising, email, posters, stickers and flyers, likely reaching more than 1.5 million people and generating more than 21,000 visits to the consultation website.*

*More than 443,000 of this audience was within the Great Sandy Marine Park local communities of Fraser Coast, Bundaberg, Gympie and Tin Can Bay.*

Image courtesy Mark Harris

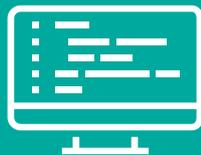




Image courtesy Tourism and Events Queensland

## How feedback was provided

**More than 6580 pieces of feedback** were received, including:



### **1245 submissions via the consultation online survey**

—over **59%** from within Great Sandy Marine Park local communities of Fraser Coast, Bundaberg, Gympie and Tin Can Bay.



### **215 written submissions**

which included two form letters. The form letters produced by the Australian Marine Conservation Society and the Queensland Seafood Industry Association generated **4056** and **1066** letters respectively.

# What the feedback said

Community and stakeholder consultation indicated strong support for the majority of changes that were proposed in the draft zoning plan.

In most cases the proposed changes were either supported as is, or with suggested modifications. These modifications were mostly in relation to the location or boundary alignment of particular Marine National Park (green) zones.

The one key proposal that was strongly opposed by the majority of respondents (70%) was the retention of commercial tunnel netting within the Conservation Park (yellow) zone of the Great Sandy Strait and Tin Can Inlet.



The majority of people who completed the online survey chose to respond to questions relating to the **revised zoning network** and indicated strong and broad support for **increasing protection of marine park habitats**.

Online survey results:

- **63%** agreed with the proposed increase of the Marine National Park (green) zones from 3.9 to 12.8% of the park
- **79%** agreed with proposed new or expanded Conservation Park (yellow) zones
- **75%** agreed with proposed new or expanded Habitat Protection (dark blue) zones



The **recreational fishing** sector provided the majority of survey consultation feedback and were broadly supportive of the draft zoning plan but suggested several modifications to reduce impacts on **recreational fishing access** at some key fishing locations.



**Commercial fishers, seafood processors and retailers and support industries strongly opposed** the proposed changes to the zoning network and the prohibition of **large mesh gill nets and ring nets** from the Conservation Park zones within Baffle Creek, Elliott River, Burrum River system, the Great Sandy Strait and Tin Can Inlet due to the significant impacts on the local industry.



The **conservation** sector provided clear support for most of the proposed changes and made suggestions to further enhance marine conservation.



The proposal to retain **commercial tunnel netting** within the Conservation Park zone of the Great Sandy Strait and Tin Can Inlet was **widely opposed**.

## Outcomes and the final zoning plan

In response to consultation, most changes proposed in the draft plan to the zones, designated areas and other management provisions will be included in the final zoning plan. You can visit [www.qld.gov.au/greatsandymarinepark](http://www.qld.gov.au/greatsandymarinepark) to find out more and read the Decision Regulatory Impact Statement which outlines the full details of each change.

The final zoning plan will increase Marine National Park (green) zones, remove some forms of commercial net fishing in certain areas; improve threatened species protection and improve protection of cultural values. Key changes include:

- change in zoning to represent 12.8% of the area of the marine park in green zones contributing to a total of 28.6% of the marine park in highly protected zones (green and yellow zones)
- removal of commercial large mesh gill nets and ring nets (operating under N1 and N2 fishery symbols) from the designated Great Sandy Area waterways
- measures to increase protection of threatened species, including shorebirds, turtles, dugongs and grey nurse sharks
- measures to protect cultural and amenity values
- zone changes to facilitate local government responses to increased coastal erosion from climate change impacts.

*Consultation feedback clearly indicated that adjusting some specific boundaries of the proposed green zones would enable fishers to better enjoy recreational opportunities within the park and reduce impacts on some commercial fishers. This feedback was taken on board and checked against scientific information about key conservation values.*

*As a result, some of these boundaries (such as at Woodgate, Woody Island and Fork Bank) have been modified for the final plan to enable continued recreational and commercial use of the park while conserving the environmental values.*

*70% of survey respondents clearly opposed the proposal to retain commercial tunnel netting within the Conservation Park (yellow) zone of the Great Sandy Strait and Tin Can Inlet. However, to retain a supply of local inshore finfish and recognising its lower risk to threatened species, tunnel netting in these areas will be allowed to continue by the small number of existing licences.*

# Overview of key changes to be included in the final zoning plan

## Habitat protection

| Outcome of review   | Reason   |
|---|--|
| <b>Green zones</b>  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Marine National Park (green) zone will increase to 12.8% of the marine park.</li> <li>✓ Commercial coral collecting in the Woody Island MNPZ will be allowed to continue as a non-conforming use with permission.</li> <li>✓ Commercial aquarium fish collecting in the Little Woody Island MNPZ will be allowed to continue as a non-conforming use with permission for collectors who can demonstrate history of use in the zone.</li> </ul> | <p>Improve protection of the range of vulnerable and other habitat types and associated biodiversity.</p> <p>Some modifications to zones have been made to reduce impacts to marine park users and/or to improve habitat protection. See Map section.</p>  |
| <b>Yellow and dark blue zones</b>   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Conservation Park (yellow) and Habitat Protection (dark blue) zones will be extended.</li> </ul>   | <p>Ensures close to 30% of the marine park is highly protected through Marine National Park (green) zones and Conservation Park (yellow) zones, more closely reflecting the intent of global protected area-based targets.</p> <p>Habitat Protection (dark blue) zones help connect these highly protected zones and remove impacts to seafloor habitats associated with trawling.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Three designated No Anchoring Areas will be established at Platypus Bay, Gatakers Bay and Gables Point (Point Vernon)</li> <li>✓ Beam trawling from the lower Mary River will be prohibited.</li> <li>✓ Commercial blood worming in the Great Sandy Strait will be prohibited.</li> </ul>  | <p>Reduce impacts on sensitive habitats.</p> <p>In line with consultation feedback, some modifications have been made to the Gatakers Bay No Anchoring Area and there will be an exemption for commercial marine aquarium fishers.</p>   |

## Designated Great Sandy Area and commercial net and crab fishing

| Outcome of review   | Reason  |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The designated Great Sandy Area will be removed from Baffle Creek, Elliott River, the Burrum River system, Great Sandy Strait and Tin Can Inlet.</li> <li>✓ Commercial fishing with large mesh gill nets and ring nets (operating under the N1 and N2 fishery symbol', including those N1 symbols attached to N10 and K8 symbols') will be prohibited in these waterways and from the proposed Habitat Protection (dark blue) zones at Dayman Spit and in the Cherwell River and upper reaches of the Burrum River.</li> </ul> | <p>Significantly reduce the risk of threatened species being entangled in commercial fishing nets.</p> <p>Address the competing uses of commercial fishing and recreational fishing in this area.</p> <p>Prevent unsustainable transfer of commercial fishing into these dark blue zones from the removal of large mesh gill nets and ring nets from the Conservation Park (yellow) zones in the Great Sandy Strait and other Great Sandy Area waterways.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Commercial set pocket netting within the Conservation Park (yellow) zones of the Mary River will be allowed to continue as a non-conforming use.</li> </ul>  | <p>Maintain a supply of locally caught fish for human consumption and bait by allowing a fishing method that is less harmful to threatened species to continue.</p>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Commercial crabbing within Conservation Park (yellow) zones of Baffle Creek, Elliott River, Burrum River system, Great Sandy Strait and Tin Can Inlet will be allowed to continue as a non-conforming use.</li> </ul>  | <p>Maintain a supply of locally caught crabs for human consumption by allowing a fishing method that is less harmful to threatened species to continue.</p>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Commercial tunnel netting (N10 fishery symbol) within Conservation Park (yellow) zones in the Great Sandy Strait and Tin Can Inlet will be allowed to continue as a non-conforming use.</li> </ul>   | <p>Maintain a supply of locally caught fish for human consumption by allowing a fishing method that is less harmful to threatened species to continue.</p>  |

## Commercial and recreational line fishing

| Outcome of review  | Reason   |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Allow the use of two handheld lines or rods with a total of no more than two hooks per person when commercially or recreationally line fishing (including trolling) in all Conservation Park (yellow) zones.</li> </ul> | <p>Provides management consistency across all Conservation Park (yellow) zones in the marine park and is also consistent with the rules that apply in Moreton Bay Marine Park.</p> |

## Protecting threatened species

| Outcome of review   | Reason  |
|---|---|
| <b>Migratory shorebirds</b>   |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ New provisions will be introduced that protect migratory shorebirds from disturbance across the entire marine park.</li> </ul>   | <p>Improve protection of migratory shorebirds at all times throughout the whole park including at all significant feeding and roost sites in the park. These new provisions will replace existing provisions that predominantly only apply in the Great Sandy Strait and Tin Can Inlet.</p> <p>Provide consistency with measures used to protect shorebirds in Moreton Bay Marine Park.</p>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Seasonal Shorebird Closure Areas will be introduced that prohibit access at four significant high tide roost sites (Moon Point, Boonooroo, Maaroom and Cooloola) at certain times of the year (Sep/Oct and Mar/Apr).</li> </ul>  | <p>Protect migratory shorebirds at the most significant roost sites during critical times in their migration cycle.</p> <p>In line with consultation feedback, there will be minor amendments to the Boonooroo closure area boundary and the inclusion of some exemptions for local government, shorebird researchers and Traditional Owners with sea Country in the area.</p>  |
| <b>Grey nurse sharks</b>  |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The size of the Marine National Park (green) zone and designated Grey Nurse Shark Area at Wolf Rock will increase and the current Buffer zone removed.</li> </ul>  | <p>Comprehensively protect the only known gestation site on the east coast of Australia for critically endangered grey nurse sharks.</p> <p>Reflect the improved knowledge of how grey nurse sharks use this area and adjacent habitats.</p>  |
| <b>Marine turtles and dugongs</b>   |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ New Go Slow Areas will be established, and existing Areas will be expanded.</li> <li>✓ Go Slow Area rules will be strengthened.</li> <li>✓ The existing Sandy Cape Go Slow Area will be in place year-round.</li> <li>✓ The zoning adjacent to the beach at Mon Repos will be upgraded to a Conservation Park (yellow) zone.</li> <li>✓ The duration of the Mon Repos designated area will be extended for one month (to the end of May).</li> <li>✓ The size of the seasonal Turtle Protection Area adjacent to Mon Repos will be extended to 5 km offshore.</li> </ul> | <p>Improve protection of turtles and dugongs by reducing the risk of harm from boat strike.</p> <p>Improve protection of turtles and dugongs based on the species' use of the area.</p> <p>Enhance protection of habitats critical for the endangered loggerhead turtle and vulnerable green turtle.</p> <p>Reduce potential impacts on turtles from trawling activity during the peak nesting season.</p> <p>Protect late season turtle hatchlings from human disturbance.</p> |

## Coastal management

| Outcome of review   | Reason  |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Small areas of zoning adjacent to some developed coastal areas will be downgraded to facilitate coastal management works to address climate change impacts.</li> <li>✓ Where necessary, the management type and boundaries of marine park zones and declared Fish Habitat Areas will also be aligned.</li> </ul> | <p>Allow local councils to carry out necessary and well-planned projects along certain sections of shorelines to tackle the problem of coastal erosion, that have worsened due to climate change.</p> |

## Protecting cultural values

| Outcome of review  | Reason   |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Go Slow Areas for natural and cultural values in Carland Creek and the northern part of Wathumba Creek will be established.</li> </ul>                                  | <p>Enhance protection of important natural and cultural values by minimising the harm caused by vessels, especially to significant sites such as middens.</p> <p>In line with consultation feedback, an additional Go-Slow Area will be designated in the northern part of Wathumba Creek.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ No Motorised Vessel Areas in Searys Creek and Cooloola Creek will be established.<br/><i>An exemption will be in place for Kabi Kabi Traditional Owners.</i></li> </ul> | <p>Reduce vessel wash and minimise erosion and degradation of significant cultural sites throughout the area.</p> <p>Establish a respectful environment for Traditional Owners to connect to Country.</p>  |

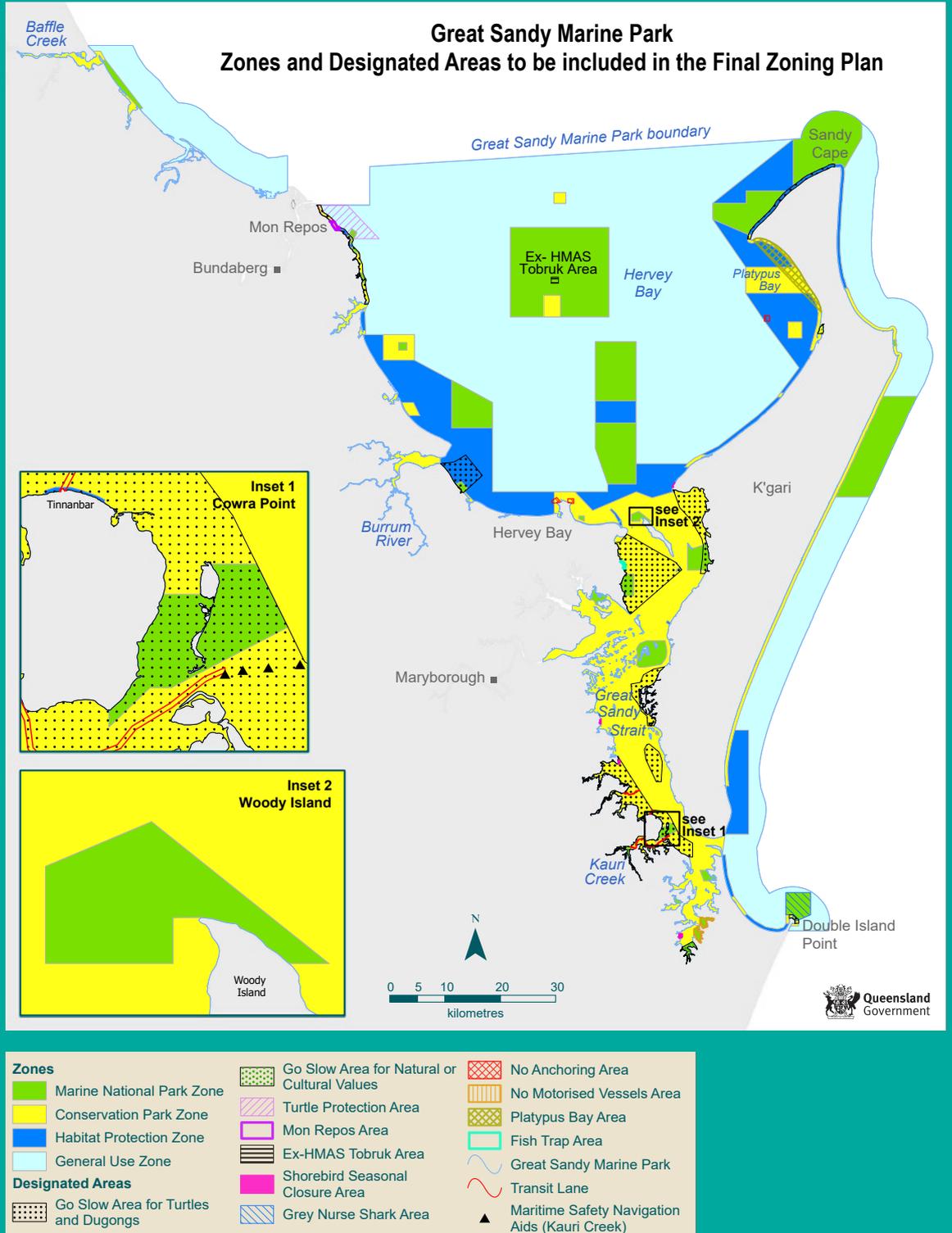
## Platypus Bay

| Outcome of review   | Reason  |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ A designated area in northeast Platypus Bay will be established that prohibits motorised water sports (for example, tubing, water skiing and the erratic driving of boats and personal watercraft) and the taking off and landing of fixed winged aircraft and helicopters.</li> </ul> | <p>Complement management objectives in place for the adjacent K'gari World Heritage area and Great Sandy National Park (K'gari section).</p> <p>Improve enjoyment of the natural values of a remote inshore area.</p> |

Further details about the review outcomes are available at [www.qld.gov.au/greatsandymarinepark](http://www.qld.gov.au/greatsandymarinepark) including the Decision Regulatory Impact Statement, and a range of large-scale and detailed maps of the final zoning network.

# ZONING NETWORK MAP

The following map shows the zoning and designated area network that will be in the final Great Sandy Marine Park zoning plan. For larger and more detailed versions of the zoning plan maps, please see the **Resources and maps** section at [www.qld.gov.au/greatsandymarinepark](http://www.qld.gov.au/greatsandymarinepark)



## Next steps

As at July 2023, there are several steps required to finalise the Great Sandy Marine Park Zoning Plan.

|           |   |  |
|-----------|---|--|
| 2023-2024 | ➤ | A commercial fisheries impact mitigation adjustment package will be developed and implemented to assist commercial fishers directly affected by these changes. |
|           | ➤ | Processes will be finalised to legislate the final zoning plan.  |
|           | ➤ | Community education to prepare marine park users for the commencement of the new zoning plan.  |
|           | ➤ | <b>The final zoning plan comes into effect in 2024.</b>  |

## Support for directly impacted businesses

Some commercial fishing and post-harvest seafood businesses will be significantly impacted as a result of the zoning plan changes, in particular by changes to the zoning network and the prohibition of large mesh gill nets and ring nets from the Conservation Park (yellow) zones within Baffle Creek, Elliott River, the Burrum River system, the Great Sandy Strait and Tin Can Inlet. A commercial fisheries impact mitigation package is currently being designed to mitigate the impacts to commercial fishers and to provide support to post-harvest seafood business and impacted workers in the commercial fishing sector that are directly affected by the changes. The package will consider the broader impacts associated with the Great Barrier Reef net fishing changes announced on 5 June 2023.

Implementation of the package will occur during the second half of 2023, prior to the final zoning plan taking effect.

Further information about the commercial fishery impact mitigation package is available on the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries website.

## Regional economic stimulus

The Queensland Government also plans to provide a regional economic enhancement package which will include the development of additional infrastructure within the marine park, such as boat ramps and artificial reefs to support recreational fishing and tourism opportunities. Further opportunities to explore the expansion of aquaculture in the region will also be investigated.

Further details on this package will be made available to the community and stakeholders as these projects are developed.

Image courtesy Tourism and Events Queensland

## Community awareness

In the lead up to the final zoning plan taking effect, there will be extensive public education and awareness programs to help support all marine park users to understand and be prepared for the new zoning plan.

To be kept informed about the Great Sandy Marine Park zoning, including changes and when they will come in to effect, please subscribe at [www.qld.gov.au/greatsandymarinepark](http://www.qld.gov.au/greatsandymarinepark)

*Management of all marine parks in Queensland includes not only public education and interpretation, but regular monitoring and enforcement to ensure compliance with zoning and other rules.*



Image courtesy Tourism and Events Queensland

## Resources and further information

Further information will be communicated through updates on the Queensland Government's Great Sandy Marine Park web page [www.qld.gov.au/greatsandymarinepark](http://www.qld.gov.au/greatsandymarinepark), as well as ongoing community awareness and education in the marine park region.

- Review of the Zoning Plan for Great Sandy Marine Park [www.qld.gov.au/greatsandymarinepark](http://www.qld.gov.au/greatsandymarinepark)
- Maps of the Great Sandy Marine Park Zoning Plan [www.qld.gov.au/greatsandymarinepark](http://www.qld.gov.au/greatsandymarinepark) (see Resources and maps section)

