

Great Sandy Marine Park Zoning Plan

SUMMARY OF KEY
PROPOSED CHANGES

SEPTEMBER 2022



Queensland
Government



INTRODUCTION

The Queensland Department of Environment and Science (DES) is undertaking a review of the zoning plan for the Great Sandy Marine Park.

In Queensland, marine parks are established under the *Marine Parks Act 2004* with the primary purpose to conserve and manage the state's marine environment.

Each marine park has a zoning plan that outlines the rules to manage the multiple uses of the park and defines the locations of different zones which in turn provide for different levels of protection and different uses. Some activities are permitted in some zones, and others are prohibited or require a permit.

The Great Sandy Marine Park was established in 2006. In 2017, the marine park's zoning plan was remade 'as is' to allow for a comprehensive review.

A draft Great Sandy Marine Park zoning plan is now available for consultation.

An aerial photograph showing a long, narrow wooden pier extending from a sandy beach into the ocean. The pier is supported by numerous vertical wooden posts. The water is a clear, light blue-green color, and the beach is a light tan color. The pier runs diagonally across the frame from the bottom left towards the top right.

*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.*

ABOUT THE GREAT SANDY MARINE PARK

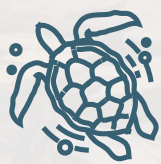
The Great Sandy Marine Park is located in the Wide Bay-Burnett Region and extends from Double Island Point in the south to Baffle Creek in the north.

The marine park covers an area of approximately 6,000 square kilometres and includes Hervey Bay, the Great Sandy Strait, Tin Can Inlet and Queensland coastal waters (seaward to 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:

- **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
- **11 declared Fish Habitat Areas** protecting key fish habitats to support the state's recreational and commercial fisheries
- **culturally and spiritually significant sea Country** for the Bailai (Byellee), Gurang, Gooreng Gooreng, Taribelang Bunda, Butchulla and Kabi Kabi First Nations peoples.

The Great Sandy Marine Park is home to:



22

Threatened species



23

Habitat types



2

Areas of international significance



11

Declared Fish Habitat Areas



Culturally significant sea Country

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 habitat types 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 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
- is the only known gestation site on the east coast of Australia for the critically endangered grey nurse shark which is under threat from bycatch from both recreational and commercial line fishing
- 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.

Key threats

Climate change

Population growth

Increasing use

THE OPPORTUNITY

This review is an opportunity to secure the long-term sustainability of the region’s natural and cultural assets, and the tourism and recreational industries they support, for generations to come.

These natural and cultural assets also underpin the enviable nature-based lifestyle and recreational opportunities the region is renowned for. This includes recreational and charter fishing, nature-based tourism experiences, boating, surfing, kayaking, stand-up paddle-boarding, snorkelling, scuba diving, bird watching, beach four-wheel driving, and walking.

By reducing pressures on the marine park and providing greater protection for wildlife and their habitats, we have the opportunity to support the recovery of threatened species and, in particular, improve the resilience of the marine environment throughout the area.

Specifically, this review provides the opportunity to:

- **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
- **better protect cultural values, respect and recognise First Nations peoples’** native title rights and responsibilities for caring for their sea Country
- **enhance the enviable nature-based and recreational fishing lifestyle** of the region
- **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 the coastal impacts of climate change**
- Largely maintain use of the marine park by the **commercial fishing** sectors of trawl, crab and line and, to a reduced extent, net fishing.

Greater conservation of the unique culture and environment of the region balanced with the sustainable use and enjoyment of the area, would protect the outdoor lifestyle for the local community and visitors to enjoy, now and into the future.



Image courtesy Mark Harris



Regional economic snapshot by sector

\$386m

Tourism annually¹

\$35.2m

Recreational fishing annually²

\$28.7m

Commercial fishing annually³

This is an opportunity to support the future economic growth of the region based on nature-based tourism and recreational and charter fishing.

1. Fraser Coast Regional Tourism Workforce Plan 2018–2020
2. BDO 2021 Recreational Fishing Economic Report (2019–20 GRP Wide Bay–Burnett region)
3. BDO 2020 Commercial Fishery Summary Economic Report (2018–19 GVP Wide Bay–Burnett region)

The consultation

Since 2019, 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.

This consultation has raised many different concerns around zoning in the park including:

- inadequate protection of threatened species and unique and vulnerable habitat types
- the future management of commercial and recreational fishing in the designated Great Sandy Area
- consideration and protection of cultural heritage sites and values
- complementary management arrangements with the northern end of K'gari (Fraser Island)
- coastal management requirements to mitigate the impacts of climate change
- general marine park administrative and compliance matters.

Developing a draft zoning plan

The draft zoning plan is based on community feedback, advice from First Nations peoples and recommendations from an independent scientific reference group.

It also incorporates socio-economic information and scientific research, in addition to current best practice marine park management principles.

A number of options were considered in developing the draft plan.

These options, and the potential benefits and impacts to the environment, the community, industry and government are detailed in full in the Consultation Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) available at: www.qld.gov.au/greatsandymarinepark.

The proposed changes

A high-level summary of the proposed changes and potential benefits and impacts is presented in this document for consideration as part of the consultation process.

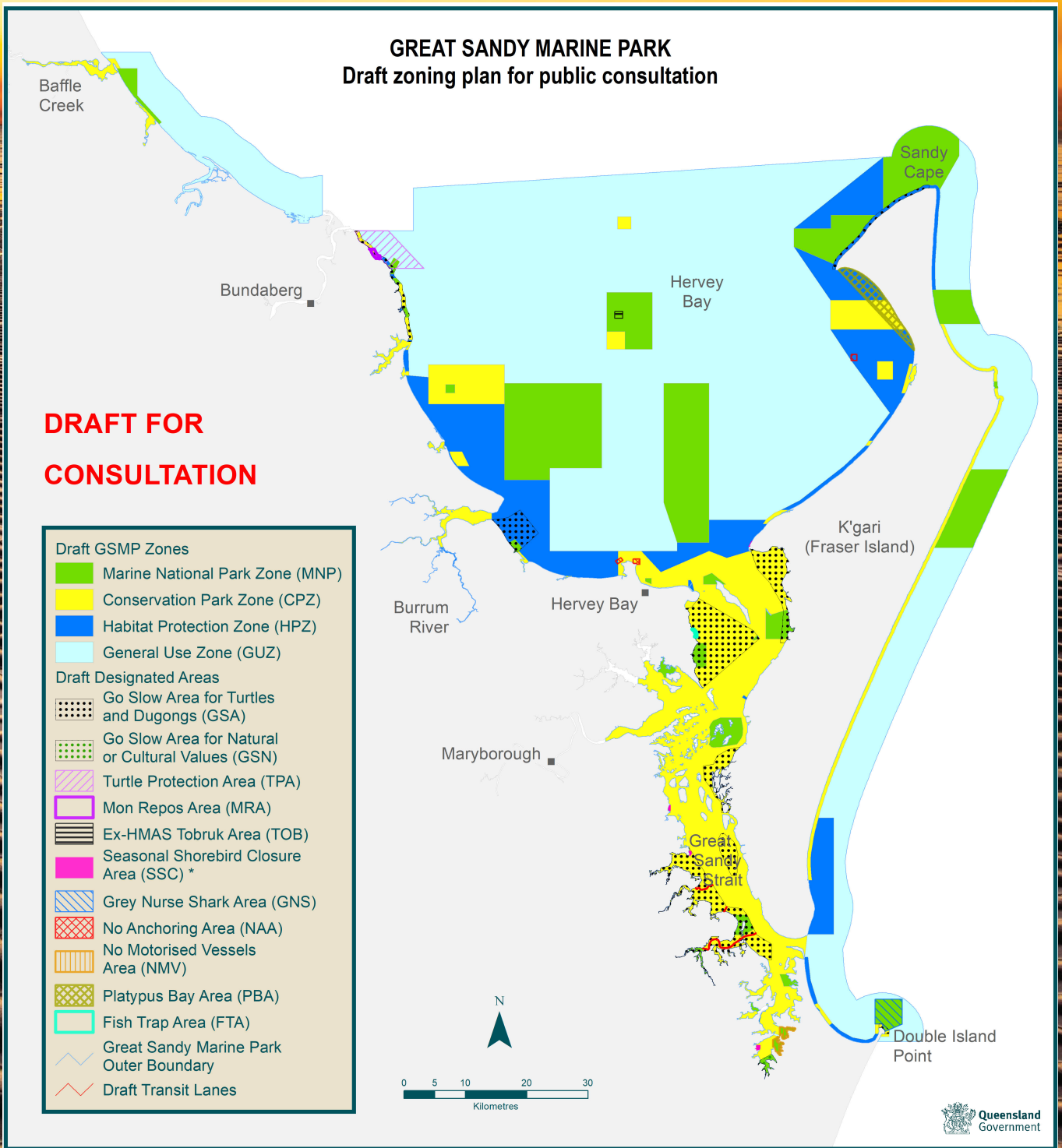
Full details are provided in the Consultation RIS available at:

www.qld.gov.au/greatsandymarinepark.

The draft plan proposes changes that would:

- increase Marine National Park (green) zones, Conservation Park (yellow) zones and Habitat Protection (dark blue) zones
- remove some forms of commercial net fishing from some areas of the marine park
- improve threatened species protection
- improve protection of cultural sites
- enable coastal management to address the impact of climate change.

These proposed changes would help conserve the marine environment and protect the long-term sustainability of the region's nature-based lifestyle, recreational fishing experiences and tourism industry.



For a more detailed version of the draft zoning plan, please see Resources at www.qld.gov.au/greatsandymarinepark or view the Consultation RIS.



SUMMARY OF PROPOSED KEY CHANGES

Habitat protection

PROPOSED CHANGE	REASON FOR CHANGE
Green zones	
<p>Increase Marine National Park (green) zones from 3.9% to 12.8% of the marine park.</p> <p><i>Refer to Section 6.1.1 and Appendices 4 and 5 in the Consultation RIS</i></p>	<p>Improve protection of the range of vulnerable and other habitat types and associated biodiversity.</p>
Yellow and dark blue zones	
<p>Extend Conservation Park (yellow) and Habitat Protection (dark blue) zones.</p> <p><i>Refer to 6.1.1 and Appendices 4 and 5 in the Consultation RIS</i></p>	<p>Ensure close to 30% of the marine park is highly protected through Marine National Park (green) zoning and Conservation Park (yellow) zoning, reflecting global targets for protected areas.</p>
<p>Remove habitat damaging activities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • anchoring over sensitive reefs at Point Vernon and in Platypus Bay • beam trawling in the Mary River • commercial bloodworming in the Great Sandy Strait. <p><i>Refer to Section 6.1.2, 6.1.3 and 6.1.4 in the Consultation RIS</i></p>	<p>Reduce impacts on sensitive habitats.</p>

Designated Great Sandy Area and commercial fishing

PROPOSED CHANGE	REASON FOR CHANGE
<p>Remove the designated Great Sandy Area which currently allows commercial net fishing in Conservation Park (yellow) zones at Baffle Creek, Elliott River, Burrum River, Great Sandy Strait and Tin Can Inlet. This proposed change prohibits commercial fishing with large mesh gill nets and ring nets in these waterways.</p> <p><i>Refer to Section 6.2 and 7 in the Consultation RIS</i></p>	<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>Prohibit commercial fishing with large mesh gill nets and ring nets from proposed Habitat Protection (dark blue) zones in the Cherwell River and upper reaches of the Burrum River.</p> <p><i>Refer to Section 6.2 in the Consultation RIS</i></p>	<p>Prevent unsustainable transfer of commercial fishing into these locations from the proposed removal of large mesh gill nets and ring nets from the Conservation Park (yellow) zones in the Great Sandy Strait.</p>
<p>Allow commercial tunnel netting to continue within Conservation Park (yellow) zones in the Great Sandy Strait and Tin Can Inlet as a non-conforming use.</p> <p><i>Refer to Section 6.2 in the Consultation RIS</i></p>	<p>Maintain a supply of locally caught fish for human consumption and bait by allowing less harmful net fishing to continue.</p> <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>Allow commercial set pocket netting within the Conservation Park (yellow) zones of the Mary River as a non-conforming use.</p> <p><i>Refer to Section 6.2 in the Consultation RIS</i></p>	<p>Maintain a supply of locally caught fish for human consumption and bait by allowing less harmful net fishing to continue.</p>

Recreational fishing

PROPOSED CHANGE	REASON FOR CHANGE
<p>Allow the use of two handheld lines or rods and two hooks per person in all Conservation Park (yellow) zones.</p> <p><i>Refer to Section 6.2 in the Consultation RIS</i></p>	<p>Reduce impacts on line fishers from the removal of the designated Great Sandy Area and introduction of the Conservation Park (yellow) zone rules, which otherwise would limit the number of handheld lines or rods and hooks that a fisher can use to one.</p> <p>Provide consistency with line fishing rules for Conservation Park (yellow) zones in Moreton Bay Marine Park.</p>

Protecting threatened species

PROPOSED CHANGE	REASON FOR CHANGE
Migratory shorebirds	
<p>Introduce provisions that protect migratory shorebirds from disturbance across the entire marine park.</p> <p><i>Refer to Section 6.3.1 and Appendix 6 in the Consultation RIS</i></p>	<p>Improve protection of migratory shorebirds throughout the park including at all significant feeding and roost sites in the park.</p>
<p>Introduce Seasonal Shorebird Closure Areas that restrict access at four significant high tide roost sites at certain times of the year.</p> <p><i>Refer to Section 6.3.1 and Appendix 6 in the Consultation RIS</i></p>	<p>Protect migratory shorebirds at the most significant roost sites during critical times in their migration cycle.</p>
Grey nurse sharks	
<p>Increase the size of the Marine National Park (green) zone and designated Grey Nurse Shark area at Wolf Rock.</p> <p><i>Refer to Section 6.3.2 and Appendix 4 in the Consultation RIS</i></p>	<p>Protect the only known gestation site on the east coast of Australia for critically endangered grey nurse sharks. Reflect the improved knowledge of how grey nurse sharks use this area and adjacent habitats.</p>
Marine turtles and dugongs	
<p>Establish new, and expand existing, Go Slow Areas and amend Go Slow Area rules.</p> <p>Change the existing Sandy Cape Go Slow Area to be in place year-round.</p> <p><i>Refer to Section 6.3.3 and Appendix 6 in the Consultation RIS</i></p>	<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>Upgrade the zoning adjacent to the beach at Mon Repos to a Conservation Park (yellow) zone.</p> <p>Expand the size of the seasonal Turtle Protection Area (which prohibits trawling between 1 November and 31 January) adjacent to Mon Repos.</p> <p>Extend the duration of the Mon Repos designated area for one month (to the end of May).</p> <p><i>Refer to Section 6.3.3 in the Consultation RIS</i></p>	<p>Enhance protection of habitats critical for the endangered loggerhead 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

PROPOSED CHANGE	REASON FOR CHANGE
<p>Downgrade small areas of zoning adjacent to some developed coastal areas.</p> <p><i>Refer to Section 6.6 and Appendix 4 in the Consultation RIS</i></p>	<p>Enable councils to undertake essential, well-planned shoreline management works to address coastal erosion issues exacerbated by climate change.</p>

Image courtesy Tourism and Events Queensland

Protecting cultural values

PROPOSED CHANGE	REASON FOR CHANGE
<p>Establish a Go Slow Area for natural and cultural values in Carland Creek.</p> <p><i>Refer to Section 6.4.2 and Appendix 6 in the Consultation RIS</i></p>	<p>Enhance protection of natural and cultural values by reducing degradation of cultural sites such as middens from the impacts of vessel use.</p>
<p>Establish a No Motorised Vessel Area in Searys Creek and Cooloola Creek.</p> <p><i>Refer to Section 6.4.3 and Appendix 6 in the Consultation RIS</i></p>	<p>Reduce vessel wash and minimise erosion and degradation of significant cultural sites throughout the area.</p> <p>Establish a respectful environment for First Nations peoples to connect to Country.</p>

Platypus Bay

PROPOSED CHANGE	REASON FOR CHANGE
<p>Establish a designated area in northeast Platypus Bay that prohibits motorised water sports (for example, erratic driving of boats and personal watercraft).</p> <p><i>Refer to Section 6.5 and Appendix 6 in the Consultation RIS</i></p>	<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>

Proposed changes to Fish Habitat Areas

Declared Fish Habitat Areas protect key fish habitats to support the state's recreational and commercial fisheries from the impacts of coastal developments. In addition to the proposed changes to the zoning plan, the department is also proposing changes to the following Declared Fish Habitat Areas in the marine park:

- Baffle Creek
- Burrum
- Fraser Island
- Kolan River
- Susan River
- Beelbi
- Elliott River
- Kauri Creek
- Maaroom
- Tin Can Inlet

Please refer to Section 6.6 and Appendix 11 in the Consultation RIS.

Support for directly impacted businesses

In developing the draft Great Sandy Marine Park zoning plan, the department has carefully considered the impacts on different sectors.

Some businesses would be directly impacted by the proposed changes.

This includes the commercial fishing sector and businesses reliant on commercial fishing, such as seafood processors and fish wholesalers.

A fair and comprehensive financial assistance and re-training package would be available for directly impacted businesses. This package would be developed in consultation with industry, following feedback on the draft zoning plan.

The Queensland Government would also provide a regional economic enhancement package which would include infrastructure such as boat ramps and artificial reefs to support recreational fishing and tourism opportunities should the proposed changes be implemented.

Image courtesy Tourism and Events Queensland



The draft Great Sandy Marine Park zoning plan is available for consultation until midnight on Sunday 23 October 2022.

If you have specific questions about the proposed changes to the zoning plan it is important that you refer to the Consultation Regulatory Impact Statement which is available online at: www.qld.gov.au/greatsandymarinepark

We are seeking your feedback on how well the proposed changes conserve and manage the marine park and/or affect you, particularly in the following key areas:

- Habitat protection (green, yellow and dark blue zoning)
- The designated Great Sandy Area and commercial fishing
- Recreational fishing
- Protecting threatened species
- Coastal management
- Protecting cultural values
- Platypus Bay.

How can you provide feedback?

You can either:

Complete the online survey available at: www.qld.gov.au/greatsandymarinepark

Lodge a written submission:

Email: gsmp.review@des.qld.gov.au

Post: Great Sandy Marine Park Zoning Plan Review

Department of Environment and Science

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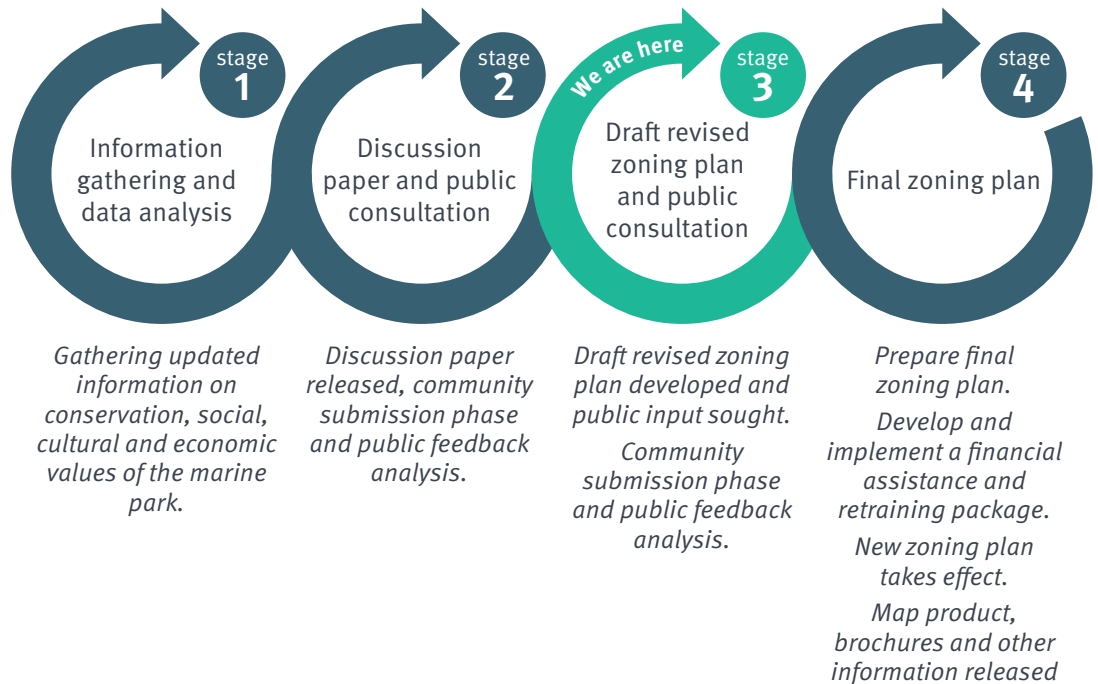
Consultation closes at midnight on Sunday 23 October 2022.

HAVE YOUR SAY

NEXT STEPS

What is the process for the review?

The review of the Great Sandy Marine Park Zoning Plan is being conducted in four stages:



Once consultation closes on the draft zoning plan, the feedback received through the online survey and written submissions will be analysed to prepare a final zoning plan.

Depending on the final zoning plan and impacts to the commercial fishing industry, a financial assistance and re-training package will then be developed, prior to the final zoning plan being formally endorsed by the Queensland Government.

www.qld.gov.au/greatsandymarinepark



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Image courtesy Tourism and Events Queensland

[www.qld.gov.au/
greatsandymarinepark](http://www.qld.gov.au/greatsandymarinepark)