Project background

The Broadwater Marine Project is a joint initiative of the Queensland Government and Gold Coast City Council seeking private sector investment to deliver what could be the largest integrated tourism development in Queensland’s history.

The world-class project seeks delivery of a cruise ship terminal on State Government-owned land on The Spit or on Wave Break Island in the Broadwater.

In addition to the terminal, the potential multi-billion dollar integrated tourism project could include a hotel, casino, marina and super yacht facilities, retail, entertainment, hospitality, community open space, recreation facilities and a mix of residential development.

A Gold Coast cruise ship terminal and associated tourism infrastructure have the potential to boost tourist visitation, increasing expenditure into the state and local economies and creating jobs.

Context

Historically, the natural estuary of the Nerang River entrance and Broadwater was a dynamic coastal system defined by shallow, mobile channels and shifting sand bars.

In 1986 the Gold Coast Seaway was opened to stabilise the river entrance and improve navigational safety. Navigation channels were dredged to the south and north connecting the Pacific Ocean and the Gold Coast Seaway to the Broadwater, creating Wave Break Island, which was vegetated to help protect the shoreline. See images below:

These substantial modifications to the Broadwater stabilised sand bars and channels, consolidating wader bird habitat areas to their current locations.

The Seaway construction also created a significant rocky substrate habitat for marine species not previously prevalent in the Broadwater or Moreton Bay area. Along with the bypass pipeline, it has become a popular dive attraction.

Historically, seagrass colonies have always been subject to seasonal environmental influences and human impact. Recent studies and mapping demonstrate that mangrove habitat creation and stormwater treatment, such as in the Broadwater Parklands redevelopment at Southport, can assist in re-colonisation of seagrass in the Broadwater.

The southern tip of South Stradbroke Island was reclaimed with sand from the seaway, becoming an environmental and coastal management reserve; now recognised under a RAMSAR* site classification.

A sand bypass system operates at the seaway to maintain the northerly drift of sand along the coastline that would otherwise be trapped against the southern training wall. Together with periodic delta dredging, this coastal process is maintained with South Stradbroke Island and Gold Coast beaches nourished.

The Moreton Bay Marine Park now extends into the northern Broadwater, north of Wave Break Island; and to the ocean north of the Seaway.

* www.ramsar.org
Environmental values of the southern Broadwater

The southern Broadwater is home to a variety of marine flora and fauna species that use the sheltered waterway for breeding, spawning, juvenile to adult growth, refuge and feeding. The relatively shallow intertidal areas and stable sand banks of the southern Broadwater support areas of established and mobile seagrass, yabbies, worms, molluscs and soldier crabs. Sand banks within the Broadwater are also recognised feeding and roosting grounds for migratory wader birds.

Fringing coastal land at The Spit, commonly known as Federation Walk, has been subject to a concerted and ongoing revegetation effort by the community. This natural open space area provides environmental habitat and outdoor recreational value to residents and visitors.

Studies and assessments

The Broadwater has been subject to recent environmental baseline study to inform future waterways planning. This study included detailed evaluation of the current environmental values of the Broadwater.

Proposal considerations

Proposals for the project must respect the environmental qualities of the Broadwater. A balanced approach must be taken to fostering city-wide economic opportunity while responsibly managing environmental impacts. As the extent of the proposals will be a key factor in determining potential environmental impacts, a flexible framework is supported to enable innovative responses, subject to proposals addressing a range of matters including:

- protecting RAMSAR* sites and Broadwater environmental values by mitigating impacts on significant habitat areas with local offsets prioritised in the Broadwater
- establishing strict protocols to ensure no cruise ship discharge into the Broadwater and emergency management procedures for sewage/spills
- positively addressing environmental considerations
- adopting best practice water management measures

* www.ramsar.org

Protecting environmental values

Due to the Broadwater's ecological significance, environmental matters will be rigorously assessed when proposals for the project are considered. In addition, as part of statutory approval processes for the project, advice from federal, state and local governments will be required.

One environmental aspect to the Broadwater is the presence of migratory birds recognised nationally and internationally as having significant environmental values. As a result, any preferred consortia identified during the Request for Detailed Proposals stage may have their proposal referred to the Federal Government under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

Under these circumstances the community can make submissions to the assessing authority regarding the proposal and how adequately environmental matters have been considered. These submissions must be taken into account when considering whether to ultimately approve the project.

Council will continue to engage with the community and other stakeholders on the project including on the protection of environmental values of the Broadwater.

Protecting the coast

Council works closely with Griffith University’s Centre for Coastal Management to undertake research and education activities that help manage the city’s beaches.

The centre was established in 1999 as a joint initiative of Council and the university to provide and coordinate expert advice on our city’s coastal management activities.

Protecting the city’s coastline and coastal processes will remain a Council priority.

Beneficial re-use of dredged sand

Substantial dredging work is anticipated for the project to:

- facilitate navigation access
- establish or modify land
- provide new recreational parkland and foreshore areas
- potentially create offset marine habitat areas

Beneficial re-use of dredged sand will be considered as part of the project. Proposals for the project are required to address coastal processes and the re-use of dredged sand.