

Submission on the Draft Noosaville Foreshore Infrastructure Master Plan

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Date: 6th July 2024

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Executive Summary

Tourism Noosa appreciates the Council's vision and initiative in seeking to enhance the amenity of the foreshore along the Noosa River. This recreational area holds a special place in the hearts of both the local Noosa community and the many visitors who come to enjoy its natural beauty and tranquillity.

By focusing on improving this cherished space, the council demonstrates a commitment to preserving and enriching the quality of life for residents while also ensuring that visitors can continue to experience the unique charm and hospitality of the Noosa Shire. Such forward-thinking undoubtedly contributes to the long-term sustainability and vibrancy of our community.

This submission on the Noosaville Foreshore Infrastructure Master Plan by Tourism Noosa aims to provide a balanced evaluation of the draft plan, highlighting both the strengths and areas of concern.

Tourism Noosa's objective is to ensure the plan aligns with Noosa's unique vision of being "different by nature" and to suggest enhancements that could better serve the community, tourism operators, and visitors.

Positive Aspects of the Plan:

- **Cultural Enhancements:** Honouring and celebrating Kubi Kubi culture.
- **Biodiversity and Water Quality:** Increasing biodiversity and improving water quality.
- **Accessibility:** All-ability beach access and circulation, as well as all-ability amenity blocks.
- **Recreational Improvements:** Redefinition of recreational playgrounds to include educational nature adventure and water-based play activities for all ages and abilities.
- **Designated Swimming Areas:** Inclusion of designated swimming areas.
- **Shaded Areas:** Inclusion of shaded areas designed for climate relief.
- **Design Elements:** The Boardwalk at the east foreshore matches the design of similar infrastructure in the Shire.

Key Findings:

- **Alignment with Noosa's Vision:** The draft plan offers significant opportunities to enhance the natural beauty of Noosa. However, it is important to ensure that new infrastructure developments preserve the area's natural charm and minimize commercial encroachment.
- **Complexity and Length of the Draft Document:** The draft plan is comprehensive, which reflects the effort to cover all aspects of development. Simplifying the document could help the community better understand and engage with the proposals.
- **Engagement Period:** The engagement period for community feedback coincided with the end of the financial year, a busy time for businesses and residents. Additionally, this period overlapped with consultations for planning scheme amendments and school holidays, making it difficult for tourism operators who are at their busiest operationally to review and comment. This further strained stakeholders' ability to participate effectively. Extending the period could allow for more meaningful participation.
- **Parking:** The draft plan proposes a significant reduction in available parking, which could negatively impact local businesses and accessibility for residents and visitors. This reduction does not consider the growing demand for parking from an increasing aging and mobility-impaired residential population and visiting friends and family.

- **Financial and Economic Modelling:** Detailed financial modelling and economic impact analyses would provide greater clarity on the feasibility and sustainability of the proposed changes.
- **Support for Existing Businesses:** Provisions to support existing businesses during the transition period could help maintain economic stability and operational efficiency.

Conclusion:

Tourism Noosa's submission emphasises the importance of a balanced approach that enhances and preserves the natural attributes of the Noosaville foreshore. The draft plan introduces several promising changes, and with further refinement and community-focused adjustments, it can better align with the community's aspirations and the expectations of the tourism industry and visitors. Tourism Noosa looks forward to working collaboratively with the council to enhance the plan.

Methodology:

Tourism Noosa (TN) has employed a comprehensive assessment of the draft Noosaville Foreshore Infrastructure Master Plan. This approach ensures a thorough review and understanding of the plan while accurately representing the interests of our stakeholders. The following steps outline our methodology:

Tourism Industry Engagement:

- **Discussions with Members:** TN held discussions with concerned members, various operators, and businesses within the Noosaville foreshore area to gather feedback. These conversations were essential in understanding their views on the draft plan and its potential impact.
- **Key Stakeholder Discussions:** TN engaged in discussions with key industry players, including tourism operators and local business associations to gather their insights and concerns.

Review of Existing Documents:

- **Noosaville Foreshore Land Use Master Plan:** We thoroughly reviewed the existing master plan to understand its objectives, key elements, and the vision it set out for the foreshore area.
- **Draft Noosaville Foreshore Infrastructure Master Plan:** A detailed analysis of the draft plan was conducted, focusing on its key proposals, changes from the existing plan, potential impacts on the community, tourism operators within the precinct, and the environment.

Anecdotal Evidence and Feedback Analysis:

- **Tourism Operator Feedback:** Feedback from discussions with operators provided valuable insights into the potential economic challenges the plan presents for the precinct.
- **Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) Segment:** The VFR segment of the market, which is closely linked to the community, shares a deep appreciation for the natural and low-key feel of the Noosaville foreshore.

Comparison and Analysis:

- **Key Inconsistencies:** Inconsistencies between the existing land use master plan and the draft infrastructure plan were identified following a detailed comparison of the two documents to pinpoint areas where the draft plan deviates from the established vision and objectives.
- **Strengthening Arguments:** Relevant points from members' feedback and other respondents were incorporated to support our position, ensuring a comprehensive and robust submission.

In taking this approach, TN has ensured this submission is well-researched, balanced, and accurately represents the concerns and aspirations of the local tourism industry and enabled a detailed and constructive response to the draft Noosaville Foreshore Infrastructure Master Plan to be provided on behalf of its members.

Documents Reviewed

To ensure a comprehensive and informed submission, Tourism Noosa reviewed several key documents relevant to the draft Noosaville Foreshore Infrastructure Master Plan. These documents provided valuable insights into the existing plans, community feedback, and overarching visions for the area. The following documents were reviewed:

- **Noosaville Foreshore Land Use Master Plan:** This document outlines the current vision, objectives, and key elements for the sustainable use and management of the Noosaville foreshore. It emphasizes preserving the natural beauty and minimizing commercial encroachment.
 - **Draft Noosaville Foreshore Infrastructure Master Plan:** The draft plan proposes significant infrastructure enhancements and commercial activities for the next 20+ years. It includes detailed proposals for precinct-based development, resilience strategies, and infrastructure improvements.
 - **Destination Noosa Strategy 2023-27 - Tourism Noosa:** Endorsed by Council in November 2023, this plan outlines the strategic approach for sustainable tourism development as a key pillar in Noosa. It highlights the importance of preserving the natural environment and ensuring that tourism activities align with the community's vision and values.
 - **Noosa Plan 2020:** The Noosa Plan 2020 sets out the planning scheme for the Noosa Shire, providing guidelines and regulations for land use, development, and environmental management. It reflects the community's aspirations and the council's vision for maintaining Noosa's unique identity.
 - **May and June Project Newsletters:** These newsletters provide updates on the development of the Noosaville Foreshore Infrastructure Master Plan. They include summaries of community feedback, key elements of the draft plan, and important announcements related to the project.
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Key Areas for Consideration

1. Alignment with Noosa's Vision

Consideration: The draft plan has the potential to enhance Noosa's natural beauty, but it is important to ensure that new infrastructure developments preserve the area's natural charm and minimize commercial encroachment. Tourism Noosa, representing over 600 members and visitors who come to Noosa for their holiday experience, is focused on ensuring that these developments align with the expectations of our members and enhance the visitor experience.

- **Details:**

- **Infrastructure Enhancements:** The proposed construction of new facilities, including clubhouses, wedding chapels, and recreational boating facilities, could significantly alter the natural and open character of the foreshore. While these enhancements aim to use resilient materials, they should align with our members' aspirations for maintaining the foreshore's natural look and feel.
- **Resilient Materials:** Although the use of resilient materials addresses climate change and environmental sustainability, our members' preference leans towards solutions that preserve the natural aesthetics and low-key atmosphere of the foreshore.

- **Anticipated Effects:**

- These changes could detract from the natural beauty that is central to Noosa's identity.
- Potential reduction in green spaces that visitors and members value highly.
- Risk of increased infrastructural presence compromising the peaceful and natural environment that attracts visitors and is enjoyed by the community more broadly.

2. Reduction in Parking

Consideration: The draft plan proposes a significant reduction in available parking, which could impact local businesses and accessibility for visitors.

- **Details:**

- **Current Parking Utilisation:** The existing parking facilities are heavily utilised by residents, visitors, and businesses. The proposed reduction is likely to exacerbate parking challenges in the area. Alternative solutions for parking in residential side streets will cause greater angst for residents.
- **Impact on Local Businesses:** Local shops, cafes restaurants and tourism operators rely on convenient parking for their customers. Reducing parking availability could lead to decreased foot traffic and revenue for these businesses. Reputation impacts of an increased inability to park close by may cause patronage decline over time, leading to business/restaurant closures.
- **Alternative Solutions:** While the draft plan proposes alternative parking solutions in other areas, these still result in a significant decrease in overall parking availability. Additionally, the alternative parking locations are farther away, presenting challenges for the aging Noosa community, those with mobility issues, and young families.

- **Public Transport:** The plan pushes for enhanced public transport utilisation. However, the current network does not provide a viable means to access the river during day and evening times, making it an impractical alternative for many foreshore users. The Draft Plan also suggests reduced parking to improve road safety and noise – unfortunately, the existing diesel-powered buses contribute more significantly to the amenity impacts of the precinct.
- **Anticipated Effects:**
 - Increased difficulty for visitors to access the foreshore, particularly for the elderly, those with mobility issues, and young families.
 - Economic impacts on local businesses due to decreased customer accessibility.
 - Spillover parking in residential areas leading to congestion and reduced quality of life for nearby residents.

3. Public Transport and Accessibility

Consideration: The draft plan's push for enhanced public transport utilisation calls for improved network capabilities to provide a viable means to access the river during the day and evenings, particularly from the hinterland and rural fringes of Noosa. The current network is also challenging for users carrying recreational and/or picnic items or special needs equipment.

- **Details:**
 - **Current Network Limitations:** The existing public transport network in Noosa is limited in frequency and coverage, particularly during evening times. This makes it an impractical alternative for many visitors, businesses, and workers.
 - **Aging Population:** Noosa has a significantly aging population, and many elderly residents rely on car transport for mobility. Reduced parking availability and reliance on public transport could pose serious accessibility challenges for these individuals.
 - **Visitor Convenience:** Visitors often prefer the convenience of car travel, especially when carrying recreational equipment or traveling with families. Insufficient public transport options could detract from their experience.
- **Anticipated Effects:**
 - Reduced accessibility for elderly visitors and those with mobility issues.
 - Inconvenience for everyone, potentially reducing visitor experience satisfaction and return rates.
 - Until effective public transport or suitable parking alternatives are provided, reliance on personal vehicle use will continue, leading to parking overflow in residential areas, further congestion, and angering nearby residents.

4. Over-Engineered Solutions

Consideration: The proposed infrastructure in the draft plan favours an over-engineered and hardened approach, which may not be suitable for the natural environment of Noosaville.

- **Details:**
 - **Infrastructure Design:** The draft plan includes extensive infrastructure enhancements that rely on hardened and engineered solutions. These may include structures like concrete

pathways, large-scale facilities, and other built elements. Excessive use of concrete may result in increased radiant heat, which would be unbearable in the QLD climate.

- **Natural Aesthetics:** Such infrastructure could clash with the natural aesthetics of the foreshore, which the community values for its unspoiled and organic look and feel.
 - **Environmental Influence:** Over-engineered solutions may have adverse environmental effects, such as disrupting local ecosystems, increasing runoff, and contributing to habitat loss.
 - **Drainage Implications:** The creation of an elevated dune introduces new challenges associated with surface drainage, particularly during significant flood events. The proposed solution of a stormwater sump well and pump system may not be able to keep pace with the rate of runoff during extreme events, potentially leading to ponding and flooding on the landward side of the dune rendering the precinct inaccessible and unavailable for use.
- **Anticipated Effects:**
 - Loss of natural beauty, which is a significant draw for both visitors and the tourism industry.
 - Potential negative environmental influences, undermining the ecological integrity of the foreshore.
 - Visitor dissatisfaction due to changes that are not in keeping with the vision of Noosa's unique identity.
 - Increased risk of drainage issues and flooding, affecting the usability and attractiveness of the foreshore area.

5. Impact on Existing Businesses

Consideration: The draft plan potentially limits the ability of existing tourism businesses on the river to improve access and provision of supplies and services. The plan does not address how these businesses might continue to operate efficiently amidst the proposed changes or allow for future growth.

- **Details:**
 - **Access and Services:** The plan has not considered the operational needs of existing businesses, such as delivery access, and customer entry points.
 - **Support for Businesses:** Support measures for businesses that may be affected by construction activities or infrastructure changes have not been expressed.
 - **Economic Viability:** Without adequate provisions, businesses may struggle to maintain their existing operations, impacting their economic viability and contribution to the local economy.
- **Anticipated Effects:**
 - Reduced efficiency and increased operational challenges for existing businesses.
 - Potential loss of revenue and economic decline for local businesses.
 - Negative influence on the local economy and employment due to possible business decline and reduced experiences being offered within the precinct.

6. Financial and Economic Modelling

Consideration: The draft plan would benefit from comprehensive financial modelling, whole-of-life cost analysis, and clear funding models. Additionally, modelling of potential economic impacts during construction or post-implementation would help inform business uncertainty as a result of the plan.

- **Details:**
 - **Financial Modelling:** The plan requires detailed financial analysis to support the proposed infrastructure investments. Understanding the costs involved or how these will be funded is an important consideration for stakeholders.
 - **Whole-of-Life Cost Analysis:** Without whole-of-life cost analysis, assessment of the long-term financial sustainability of the proposed infrastructure is difficult.
 - **Economic Influence Studies:** Economic impact studies to evaluate the potential effects on local businesses during the construction phase and the impacts of the proposed reduction in parking spaces would help to better inform stakeholders' assessment and feedback to the Council on the draft plan.
- **Anticipated Effects:**
 - Financial uncertainty could lead to budget overruns and incomplete projects.
 - Local businesses may face serious economic challenges, including job losses, due to construction disruptions and reduced customer access.
 - The tourism industry and the community may bear the financial burden of underfunded projects through increased rates or taxes.

7. Complexity and Length of the Draft Document

Consideration: The draft plan is comprehensive, reflecting the effort to cover all aspects of development. However, its complexity and length make it difficult for our members and the community to fully comprehend and engage with the proposals.

- **Details:**
 - The document conflates multiple planning issues, such as climate change adaptation, asset management, land use, transport, traffic, parking, and placemaking, into one large complex document.
 - Our members have expressed confusion and difficulty in understanding the plan's content.
- **Anticipated Effects:**
 - The complexity of the document may hinder effective engagement and individual feedback from our members.
 - Important details may be overlooked by stakeholders, leading to less informed decisions and potential dissatisfaction with the final plan.

8. Engagement Period

Consideration: The engagement period for community feedback coincided with a busy time for businesses and residents, including EOFY, Noosa Plan Amendment, and School Holidays (spread over 4 weeks with QLD, VIC, and NSW overlapping). Extending the period could allow for more meaningful participation from our members and the broader tourism industry and would be welcomed.

- **Details:**

- **Timing:** The engagement period was set during the end of the financial year, a time when businesses and residents are typically preoccupied with financial obligations and reporting. The period also coincided with school holidays, a busy period for the tourism industry.
- **Overlap with Other Consultations:** Concurrent consultations for planning scheme amendments have added to the burden on our members, making it challenging to allocate sufficient time and resources to review and respond to the draft plan.

- **Anticipated Effects:**

- Reduced opportunity for meaningful participation and feedback from our members.
- Potential lack of comprehensive input from key stakeholders, leading to a plan that may not fully reflect the needs and preferences of the tourism industry and visitors to Noosa.

Considered Actions and Options

Based on the detailed analysis of the draft Noosaville Foreshore Infrastructure Master Plan and the feedback gathered from our members and industry stakeholders, Tourism Noosa provides the following actions and options for Council consideration to ensure the plan aligns more closely with Noosa's vision and community needs:

1. Align Infrastructure Enhancements with Noosa's Vision

- **Preserve Natural Beauty:** Reevaluate proposed infrastructure enhancements to ensure they align with our members' desire to maintain the natural and open character of the foreshore. Focus on low-impact, sustainable solutions that enhance the natural aesthetics of the area.
- **Consultation:** Engage with foreshore business operators in a meaningful way to gather input on specific infrastructure projects and to better understand their unique requirements. This will help ensure that any developments reflect their collective aspirations and maintain the unique identity of Noosa.

2. Address Parking Concerns

- **Maintain Adequate Parking:** Reevaluate the proposed reduction in parking spaces to ensure it meets the needs of residents, businesses, and visitors. Consider maintaining or even increasing parking availability to accommodate the growing demand; this may even include paid parking in high-demand sections of the foreshore.
- **Accessibility for All:** Ensure alternative parking solutions are viable and accessible for Noosa's aging population, those with mobility issues, and young families. This may include providing more convenient parking locations closer to key areas of the foreshore.

3. Enhance Public Transport and Accessibility

- **Public Transport Improvements:** Collaborate with relevant authorities to enhance the public transport network, making it a more environmentally sustainable, practical, and reliable alternative for accessing the foreshore. This includes increasing the frequency and coverage of bus and public ferry services, especially during peak times and evenings.

Advocate to the State to replace diesel-powered buses with electric-powered ones for reduced noise impacts, and fumes, and improved public perception of Noosa Council's commendable environmental commitment.

- **Improve Public Transport:** Work with transport authorities to improve the public transport network, making it more reliable and frequent, especially during peak and evening times. This will provide a viable alternative for accessing the foreshore.
- **Accessibility Considerations:** Ensure that public transport options cater to the needs of elderly residents and those with mobility issues to make the foreshore accessible to all visitors.

4. Opt for Environmentally Sensitive Solutions

- **Sustainable Design:** Prioritize environmentally sensitive solutions over highly-engineered approaches. This includes incorporating natural materials and designs that blend seamlessly with the existing landscape.
- **Environmental Impact Assessments:** Conduct thorough environmental impact assessments for all proposed infrastructure projects to ensure they do not harm local ecosystems or biodiversity.

- **Drainage Solutions:** Reevaluate the proposed elevated dune and drainage system to ensure they do not exacerbate flooding risks. Implement solutions that manage stormwater effectively without compromising the natural environment.

5. Support Existing Businesses

- **Operational Provisions:** Develop strategies to support existing businesses along the river, ensuring they can maintain access and provision of supplies and services during and after the implementation of the plan.
- **Business Support Measures:** Consider providing financial or logistical support to businesses that may be affected by construction activities or infrastructure changes. This will help them adapt and continue to thrive.

6. Conduct Comprehensive Financial and Economic Modelling

- **Financial Analysis:** Undertake detailed financial modelling to assess the costs and benefits of the proposed infrastructure investments. This should include a whole-of-life cost analysis to ensure long-term financial sustainability.
- **Economic Impact Studies:** Conduct economic impact studies to evaluate the potential effects on local businesses during construction and post-implementation. This will help identify any negative influences and develop strategies to mitigate them.
- **Clear Funding Models:** Outline clear funding models for the proposed projects, identifying potential sources of funding and ensuring financial transparency.

7. Simplify and Clarify the Draft Document

- **Disaggregate Content:** Consider breaking down the draft plan into separate, more manageable documents that address specific issues, such as climate change adaptation, asset management, and land use planning. This will make it easier for readers to understand, consider, and provide feedback.
- **Clear Communication:** Simplify the language and presentation of the draft plan to ensure it is accessible to all stakeholders, including those with limited time or expertise in planning matters.

8. Extend the Engagement Period

- **Timing Adjustments:** Provide an extended engagement period to ensure that all stakeholders have sufficient time to review and provide feedback on the draft plan. Avoid overlapping consultation periods with other significant community engagements or busy times, such as the end of the financial year and school holiday periods.

Conclusion

Tourism Noosa's submission on the Council's draft Noosaville Foreshore Infrastructure Master Plan reflects a comprehensive review of the proposed changes and their potential effects on our members, the tourism industry, and the visitor experience.

Our detailed analysis has identified several key areas where the draft plan can be improved to better align with the vision and values established in the existing Noosaville Foreshore Land Use Master Plan.

Positive Aspects of the Plan:

- **Cultural Enhancements:** Honouring and celebrating Kubi Kubi culture.
- **Biodiversity and Water Quality:** Increasing biodiversity and improving water quality.
- **Accessibility:** All-ability beach access and circulation, as well as all-ability amenity blocks.
- **Recreational Improvements:** Redefinition of recreational playgrounds to include educational nature adventure and water-based play activities for all ages and abilities.
- **Designated Swimming Areas:** Inclusion of designated swimming areas.
- **Shaded Areas:** Inclusion of shaded areas designed for climate relief.
- **Design Elements:** The Boardwalk at the east foreshore matches the design of similar infrastructure in the Shire.

Summary of Points for Improvement and Key Proposals:

- **Alignment with Noosa's Vision:**
 - **Improvement Needed:** The proposed infrastructure enhancements and over-engineered solutions should be balanced to preserve the natural beauty and charm that define Noosa.
 - **Proposal:** Focus on low-impact, sustainable solutions that enhance the natural aesthetics and character of the foreshore.
- **Parking Adjustments:**
 - **Improvement Needed:** Ensure that parking solutions address the needs of an aging population and consider the current reliance on car travel, given the limitations of the public transport network.
 - **Proposal:** Reevaluate the proposed reduction in parking spaces and ensure alternative solutions are viable and accessible for all.
- **Public Transport and Accessibility:**
 - **Improvement Needed:** Improve the public transport network to ensure it can effectively replace reduced parking spaces and provide accessibility for all visitors and residents, especially the elderly.
 - **Proposal:** Work with relevant authorities to enhance the public transport network, making it a more practical and reliable alternative for accessing the foreshore.
- **Environmentally Sensitive Solutions:**
 - **Improvement Needed:** Favor environmentally sensitive and sustainable design approaches that complement the natural environment of Noosaville.

- **Proposal:** Prioritize sustainable design and conduct thorough environmental impact assessments for all projects.
- **Support for Existing Businesses:**
 - **Improvement Needed:** Develop strategies to support existing businesses during and after the implementation of the plan, ensuring their operational efficiency and economic viability.
 - **Proposal:** Provide financial or logistical support to businesses affected by construction activities or infrastructure changes.
- **Financial and Economic Modelling:**
 - **Improvement Needed:** Include detailed financial and economic analyses to ensure the feasibility and long-term sustainability of the proposed changes.
 - **Proposal:** Undertake detailed financial modelling and economic impact studies to assess the costs and benefits of the proposed infrastructure investments.
- **Simplifying the Draft Document:**
 - **Improvement Needed:** Simplify the draft plan to enhance community understanding and engagement by breaking it down into more manageable sections.
 - **Proposal:** Disaggregate the content and simplify the language and presentation of the draft plan.
- **Extended Engagement Period:**
 - **Improvement Needed:** Allow for a longer engagement period to ensure comprehensive community feedback and meaningful participation from all stakeholders.
 - **Proposal:** Provide an extended engagement period and use a variety of communication channels to reach a broader audience.

Final Statement:

Tourism Noosa is committed to and welcomes the opportunity, to work with the Council to refine the Noosaville Foreshore Infrastructure Master Plan. By considering our members' feedback and the commentary in this submission, we can ensure the treasured Noosaville foreshore remains a cherished and sustainable asset for both residents and visitors of Noosa. This will help reflect and retain Noosa's unique identity of being "different by nature" long into the future.