

Protections for World Surfing Reserves in Queensland



Community consultation Snapshot of results

As part of the Activate! Queensland 2019–2029 strategy, the Queensland Government is committing to protect and safeguard Queensland's World Surfing Reserves at Noosa and the Gold Coast.

From 2 October to 30 November 2020, community consultation was undertaken to seek feedback on the [Protections for World Surfing Reserves in Queensland discussion paper](#). Feedback was provided via an online survey and written submissions.

During the eight-week consultation period, 86 responses were received. This included 72 online survey responses and 14 written submissions.

Responses came from a diverse cross-section of stakeholders, including input from residents, surfing stewardship committees, local councils, and First Nations peoples. Male respondents accounted for 56% of survey participants, while female respondents accounted for 44% of survey participants. Responses came from a broad range of age groups. A small number of respondents reported having an ongoing disability (3%).



43% of survey responses were from surfers.

81% of online survey respondents provided feedback on the Gold Coast World Surfing Reserve and 43% of respondents provided feedback on the Noosa World Surfing Reserve. Almost all responses came from residents of Queensland.

Although many key stakeholders provided comprehensive feedback during consultation, wider community engagement was limited as a consequence of COVID-19 pandemic health restrictions and Queensland Government election caretaker conventions. Given the small response rate, this data is not representative of the whole community.

Key findings

Respondents were asked to provide feedback on three key areas:

- what values are important in Queensland's World Surfing Reserves
- key threats these areas may face
- how we can ensure the waves and surrounding areas are protected into the future.

Overwhelmingly, consultation revealed a desire to protect Queensland's World Surfing Reserves from environmental damage, future development and increased population, as well

as preserve the cultural values of both First Nations peoples and surfing heritage. Although there were varying opinions on the best way to do this, results largely indicate a strong desire to protect these areas through government legislation.

During the consultation process, several themes emerged.

Preserving the quality of the waves

A spectrum of views was expressed on how to preserve wave quality in World Surfing Reserves. Respondents identified sand erosion as a concern but were divided on how best to manage this. Some favoured as little intervention as possible in undertaking beach works, such as sand pumping and dredging, while equally other respondents felt this issue has been managed well but noted it should be continued in moderation.

Environmental and natural characteristics

Respondents identified water quality and natural surroundings as the most important natural characteristics of the reserves, with the majority of respondents expressing satisfaction with the current status of these characteristics.

There was some concern raised about pollution, the impact of climate change and population growth.

Gold Coast respondents stressed the importance of maintaining and enhancing vegetation and trees on the foreshore, and expressed concern about the human impact to wildlife and local ecosystems.

Noosa respondents also noted the human impact on the environment; raising concerns about the impact of tourism, events, parties, thrill boat operators and jet skis, and expressed a desire to see this impact limited.

All respondents who commented on parking agreed it was not adequate and were concerned by a lack of free parking.

First Nations culture and surfing culture

Respondents spoke of respect, appreciation and recognition of the cultural significance of the reserve areas for First Nations peoples.

Respondents expressed an interest in greater public awareness and education about First Nations culture in the reserves, such as through interpretive signage, naming and co-naming of places, and cultural events.



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Both Gold Coast and Noosa residents acknowledged their respective surfing cultural heritage and felt that the natural environment is intrinsic to the surfing heritage. Noosa respondents, in particular, expressed pride in maintaining the natural environment.

Economic and commercial values

Respondents were cognisant of the delicate relationship between tourism and the environment, and agreed the natural environment, culture and lifestyle should be preserved to ensure tourism continues in a sustainable manner.

The flow-on effects of surfing-related tourism to small local businesses were also seen as important.

Events

There were notable differences in responses about the importance of events to Noosa and the Gold Coast. Respondents agreed events are vital to the local economy, however advocated for protection of the natural environment against the negative impacts of events such as pollution, overcrowding and noise.

Threats to the reserves

Gold Coast respondents identified development as the biggest threat to the reserve, followed by environmental concerns. Noosa respondents identified issues around conduct or behaviour as a key threat, followed by development and environmental concerns.

Respondents repeatedly raised trams and/or the light rail system as a potential threat to the Gold Coast reserve, along with ocean-front land development and high-rise buildings.

Two behaviour threats strongly emerged—unsafe conduct and issues around overcrowding in the surf.

Both Gold Coast and Noosa respondents also raised issues around the behaviour of other users of the surf such as those with jet skis, boats, hydrofoils and yachts.

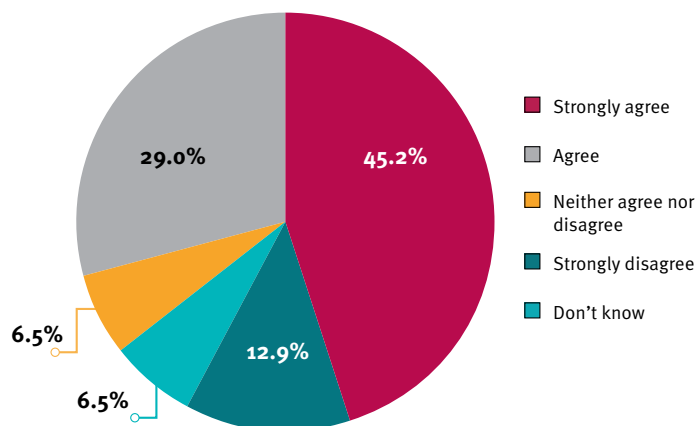
Management of reserves

Opinions on the management of the Gold Coast reserve were mixed. While a large number of respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with existing management, many were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the existing management, or somewhat or very dissatisfied.

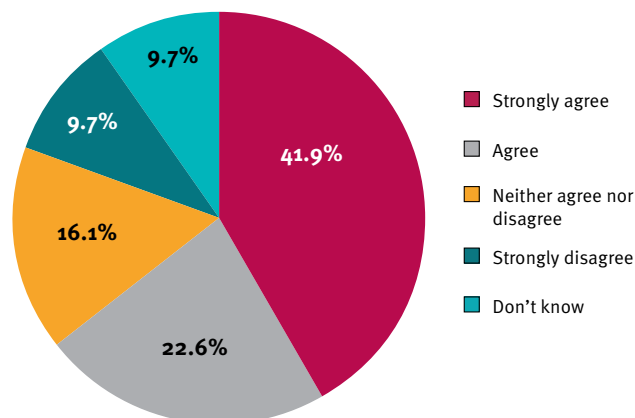
The majority of respondents for Noosa were satisfied with the existing management of the Noosa World Surfing Reserve.

Responses were mixed when asked to consider the establishment of a statewide oversight mechanism. Although many responders agreed with the idea, some respondents believed this mechanism should not replace local stewardship committees or restrict existing local government powers.

Q: Do you agree or disagree that Queensland should **introduce new, standalone legislation** to protect the values of World Surfing Reserves?



Q: Do you agree or disagree that Queensland should **change existing legislation** to protect the values of World Surfing Reserves?



Greater protections

Both Gold Coast and Noosa respondents agreed or strongly agreed that greater protections are needed to preserve the reserves, with equal support for either new legislation or changes to existing legislation.

New legislation attracted responses that were centred on the need to protect the reserves against economic development, including cruise ships, seawalls, marinas and shipping terminals.

Next steps

The outcomes of this community consultation will help guide the development of options for the lasting protections of Queensland's current and future surfing reserves. The Queensland Government will work with key stakeholders to develop these options, including both legislative and non-legislative alternatives.

More information

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