Priority port master planning

**Report on public consultation**

Draft master plan and draft port overlay for the priority Port of Abbot Point

Queensland | Australia | 2023

**Copyright information**

© State of Queensland (Department of Transport and Main Roads) 2023



The Queensland Government is committed to providing accessible services to Queenslanders of all cultural and linguistic backgrounds. If you have difficulty understanding this publication and need a translator, please call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) on 13 14 50 and ask them to telephone the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads on 13 74 68.

Disclaimer: While every care has been taken in preparing this publication, the State of Queensland accepts no responsibility for decisions or actions taken as a result of any data, information, statement or advice, expressed or implied, contained within. To the best of our knowledge, the content was correct at the time of publishing.

Front cover image: Aerial view of the Port of Abbot Point. Photo courtesy of NQBP

Table of Contents

[1. Background 3](#_Toc159234844)

[1.1 Priority port master planning 3](#_Toc159234845)

[1.2 Master planning for the priority Port of Abbot Point 3](#_Toc159234846)

[2. Purpose 6](#_Toc159234847)

[3. Public consultation overview 7](#_Toc159234848)

[3.1 Consultation approach 7](#_Toc159234849)

[3.2 Public information sessions 8](#_Toc159234850)

[3.3 Queensland Government media 9](#_Toc159234851)

[3.4 NQBP communications and media 9](#_Toc159234852)

[3.5 Consultation with Traditional Owners 9](#_Toc159234853)

[3.6 Website downloads 10](#_Toc159234854)

[4. Submissions 11](#_Toc159234855)

[5. Themes of public consultation and responses 12](#_Toc159234856)

[5.1 Themes from public consultation 12](#_Toc159234857)

[5.2 Analysis and responses 12](#_Toc159234858)

[6. Case Study: Raising community awareness 14](#_Toc159234859)

[7. Conclusion 15](#_Toc159234860)

[Appendix A – Response to Submissions 16](#_Toc159234861)

[1. Refinements of the draft master plan, draft port overlay and evidence base report – content and mapping 16](#_Toc159234862)

[2. Protection of the Caley Valley Wetland 19](#_Toc159234863)

[3. Cumulative Impact Management 20](#_Toc159234864)

[Appendix B – Media 21](#_Toc159234865)

## Tables

[**Table 1: Download Statistics for Master Planning Documents 10**](#_Toc159234866)

[**Table 2: Submission Themes 12**](#_Toc159234867)

# 1. Background

## 1.1 Priority port master planning

The *Sustainable Ports Development Act 2015* (Ports Act) provides a legislative framework for sustainable port planning and development in Queensland. In accordance with the Ports Act, the Queensland Government is advancing master planning for the priority ports of Gladstone, Townsville, Hay Point/Mackay and Abbot Point.

Priority port master planning is a state government port-related commitment of the *Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan* (Reef 2050 Plan). The Reef 2050 Plan is a joint Australian and Queensland Government strategy for securing the long-term health and resilience of the Great Barrier Reef (GBR).

Through priority port master planning, the Queensland Government will effectively manage the land and marine areas needed for the efficient development and operation of the priority ports, while ensuring that the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (GBRWHA) is an intrinsic consideration in priority port development, management, and governance. Master planning will support the sustainable development of critical economic infrastructure, the state's priority ports, in a way that will balance growth, job creation, environmental values and community interests.

## 1.2 Master planning for the priority Port of Abbot Point

The priority Port of Abbot Point, located 25 kilometres north of Bowen, is Australia's most northern coal export port. The port is a critical trade gateway for the Queensland resources industry and has the potential to be a hydrogen export super hub in the future, due to its strategic advantages. Situated away from urban development and with naturally deep water close to shore, the port is well positioned for future growth. The port is also adjacent to the Abbot Point State Development Area (APSDA) which was established to facilitate large-scale industrial and port-related development of regional, state and national significance.

Through master planning, the Queensland Government has demonstrated a commitment to support the priority ports' ongoing sustainable development and in turn, jobs growth in the Central Queensland region.

Master planning has established a long-term vision for future development at the Port of Abbot Point, consistent with the principles of ecologically sustainable development. Master planning provides a strategic and coordinated approach to development, considering environmental, economic, cultural and community issues beyond strategic port land, including potential marine and land-based impacts, port and supply chain infrastructure capacity and connectivity. It aims to strike a balance between the sustainable development of the Port of Abbot Point and the adjacent APSDA, providing the long-term protection of environmental and cultural values, including the GBRWHA and the Caley Valley Wetland.

In accordance with the Ports Act, the Queensland Government released a draft master plan and draft port overlay for the priority Port of Abbot Point for public consultation, commencing on 17 October 2022 and closed on 20 January 2023. The total consultation period was 96 (calendar) days, or just over 13 weeks.

The draft master plan and draft port overlay were released for comment simultaneously for transparency on the long-term vision for sustainable development at the priority Port of Abbot Point and to enable stakeholders and the community to view and comment on both draft documents.

Two Evidence Base Reports were prepared to inform the preparation of the draft master plan and draft port overlay for the priority Port of Abbot Point. The first Evidence Base Report provided an overview of environmental, social, cultural and economic matters in and around the priority port. A second report, Planning and Environment Report, was then prepared to provide an independent analysis of information gaps, planning issues/risks to be managed, and the effectiveness of existing management measures. Both reports were made available on the Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) master planning website from the commencement of the consultation period.

The public consultation provided stakeholders and the community an opportunity to make submissions on the draft documents and raise matters for consideration by TMR.

The consultation on the draft documents associated with master planning for the priority Port of Abbot Point was conducted at the same time as the public consultation on the draft documentation for the master planning for the priority port of Hay Point/Mackay. The simultaneous approach streamlined the public consultation stages for the two master planning processes.

# 2. Purpose

Under section 45 of the Ports Act, the Queensland Government is required to keep a register of matters raised in submissions on the draft master plan and draft port overlay during public consultation.

The purpose of this consultation report is to meet the requirements of section 45 of the Ports Act by providing:

* a summary of the matters raised in submissions received during the public consultation period
* an overview of the Government's response to the summarised matters, including how the final master plan considered the matters raised.

# 3. Public consultation overview

## 3.1 Consultation approach

The public consultation process was conducted to meet the requirements of the Ports Act and applied a range of communication and stakeholder engagement activities to raise community awareness of the scope, and process of master planning, and provided the opportunity to comment on the draft master plan and draft port overlay.

The draft master plan and draft port overlay for the priority Port of Abbot Point published for the public consultation process to commence on 17 October 2022. The original consultation period was eight weeks and submissions were to close on 12 December 2022. During the original eight-week consultation period, one written request for additional time to make a submission relating to the priority Port of Abbot Point was requested and granted.

After community requests to extend the consultation period for the priority Port of Hay Point/Mackay, the consultation period was officially extended to 20 January 2023 for both priority ports – Abbot Point and Hay Point/Mackay. The resultant total consultation period for the priority Port of Abbot Point was just over 13 weeks.

The public consultation involved:

* A public notice was published in the Mackay & Whitsunday Life, Daily Mercury, The Courier-Mail and The Australian on 14 October 2022 and, in digital format, on the online portals for the Mackay Whitsunday Life and Daily Mercury on the day the consultation was launched on 17 October 2022.
* A notice was published in the Queensland Government Gazette on 14 October 2022 advertising the public consultation for the draft master plan and draft port overlay. This notice was issued three days prior to the launch of public consultation.
* The publication of the draft master plan and draft port overlay, supporting master planning documentation, consultation fact sheets, information on making submissions, and mapping showing the proposed precincts was uploaded onto the TMR priority port master planning website on 17 October 2022.
* Displays of printed copies of the draft master plan, supporting master planning documentation and consultation fact sheets from the commencement of the consultation period were available at Bowen Library (67 Herbert Street, Bowen) and TMR offices in both Bowen and Brisbane.
* A dedicated project telephone hotline and email address ([AbbotPointPortMasterPlan@tmr.qld.gov.au](mailto:AbbotPointPortMasterPlan@tmr.qld.gov.au)) for enquiries for the duration of the consultation period was created.
* A landing page on the Queensland Government’s Get Involved website linking to the TMR webpage was created.
* A stakeholder newsletter was sent to subscribers for electronic master planning updates.
* Paid social media posts were placed on Facebook geotagged to the local area.
* Public information sessions were held in Bowen (24 and 25 November 2022). See [**Section 2.2**](#_2.__Purpose) for more information.
* TMR presentations to private sector organisations with interests in the land areas within the proposed master planned area were available, upon request.

In accordance with the Ports Act, public notices outlined:

* Where the draft master plan could be inspected in hard copy.
* The website address for electronic versions.
* A phone number and email address to gain information about the draft master plan and draft port overlay.
* Details of how to make a submission and the date submissions closed.

In addition, letters from the Minister of Transport and Main Roads were sent to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the North Queensland Bulk Ports Corporation Limited (NQBP), the CEO of the Whitsunday Regional Council and the Queensland Coordinator-General advising that the draft master plan and draft port overlay had been prepared and released for public consultation.

## 3.2 Public information sessions

TMR hosted public information sessions to provide the community with the opportunity to meet and talk to project officers about the draft master plan and draft port overlay for the priority Port of Abbot Point. The sessions were held on 24 November (4.00pm to 6.00pm) and 25 November 2022 (10.00am to 12.00pm) at the Bowen Police-Citizens Youth Club.

Details of the public information sessions were advertised on the TMR website and the TMR Facebook page.

The information sessions provided members of the public, community groups, local businesses and industry stakeholders an opportunity to speak directly with project officers either one-on-one, or in small groups, and to discuss topics relevant to them regarding port master planning.

Across the two sessions, 14 people attended to learn more about the priority port master planning program, the draft master plan and draft port overlay for the priority Port of Abbot Point and how to make a submission.

## 3.3 Queensland Government media

[**Appendix B**](#_Appendix_B_–) outlines the Queensland Government media activities for raising community awareness on the public consultation and how to make a submission.

## 3.4 NQBP communications and media

To support the promotion of the public consultation program, the port authority for the priority port, NQBP, undertook the following complementary activities:

* Advised Bowen Collinsville Enterprise (BCE) members of the public consultation as part of NQBP’s update to BCE meeting on 10 October 2022.
* Forwarded TMR’s email regarding rescheduled public information sessions to BCE and Bowen Chamber of Commerce on 1 November 2022.
* Uploaded a news item to the NQBP website on 13 December 2022.
* Featured information on port master planning on NQBP's website planning page, including a link to TMR's website master planning page.

## 3.5 Consultation with Traditional Owners

Contact was maintained with representatives of Traditional Owners for the master planned area – Kyburra Munda Yalga Aboriginal Corporation and Juru Enterprises Limited - throughout the master planning process, including gathering information about cultural significance of sites during the preparation of the Evidence Base Report to ensure their protection.

Individual stories of Traditional Owners' stewardship of land at Abbot Point and the connection to country were included in the final master planning documents.

## 3.6 Website downloads

There were 689 views of the master planning website of the priority Port of Abbot Point in the period up to March 2023. The following documents were downloaded from the website during the public consultation period.

Table 1: Download Statistics for Master Planning Documents

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Master planning documents** | **Download statistics** |
| Draft master plan for the priority Port of Abbot Point | 210 |
| Draft port overlay for the priority Port of Abbot Point | 135 |
| Evidence Base Report | 78 |
| Planning and Environment Report | 73 |
| Factsheet – Evidence base master planning | 73 |
| Factsheet – Outstanding Universal Value at the priority Port of Abbot Point | 72 |
| Factsheet – What is a master plan? | 71 |
| Factsheet – What is a port overlay? | 70 |
| Factsheet – Have your say | 68 |
| **Total number of downloads during public consultation** | **850** |

# 4. Submissions

A total of eight submissions were received during the public consultation period about master planning for the priority Port of Abbot Point. Of the eight, four were specifically about master planning for the priority Port of Abbot Point and four were regarding master planning for both the priority Port of Abbot Point and the priority Port of Hay Point/Mackay. The submissions were received from the following stakeholders:

* Three submissions from Queensland Government agencies.
* Two submissions from environmental groups.
* One submission from a port authority.
* One submission from a local government.
* One submission from industry.

# 5. Themes of public consultation and responses

## 5.1 Themes from public consultation

A range of matters were raised in the submissions. These matters were categorised into four themes.

The number of submissions received in relation to each theme is detailed in the table below.

Table 2: Submission Themes

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Theme** | **Number of submissions addressing the theme\*** |
| Refinements of the draft master plan, draft port overlay and evidence base report content and mapping | 4 |
| Protection of the Caley Valley Wetland | 4 |
| Cumulative Impact Management | 1 |
| General comments on master planning for the priority Port of Abbot Point | 3 |

\*Note: Some submissions raised multiple issues resulting in the column total exceeding the total number of submissions.

## 5.2 Analysis and responses

All submissions received were analysed and considered during preparation of the final master plan and final port overlay for the priority Port of Abbot Point. The breakdown of each theme into issues raised is presented in [**Appendix A**](#_Appendix_A_–), together with the Queensland Government's response and how the matters were considered in preparing the final master plan and final port overlay.

**Comments of Support from Submitters:**

* highly supportive of the draft master plan, believing it strikes a good balance between protecting environmental values while enabling the development of the port precinct for future industries
* congratulates the Queensland Government on the preparation of these key ports planning documents, following on from their commitments to improve port management in Queensland.

# 6. Case Study: Raising community awareness

#### TMR's Facebook – a key channel for raising community awareness on public consultation

The public consultation for the draft master plan and draft port overlay for both ports represented an important milestone in the master planning program. The consultation was a statutory obligation under the Ports Act and provided an opportunity for the community and stakeholders to have their say on the draft master planning documentation.

Master planning aims to support the balance between sustainable port development and the protection of environmental, cultural and social values in and around the priority port. Through consultation, the community and stakeholders were able to comment, ensuring this goal is achieved in the final documentation.

As part of a broader communications and media campaign, an important step taken by TMR was publishing posts on their Facebook site.

The social media platform featured three posts during the public consultation period (25 October 2022, 16 November 2022 and 11 December 2022). The posts were a vital communication strategy for raising public awareness of the consultation process. The posts provided links to the TMR website featuring online versions of the draft documents and supporting materials such as fact sheets about master planning. The Facebook posts also included details on how the community could have their say.

The post on 11 December 2022 allowed TMR to notify the community of an extension of an additional 39 days to the consultation timeframe. The extension was in response to the Mackay community's requests for more time to make submissions.

# 7. Conclusion

The draft master plan and draft port overlay for the priority Port of Abbot Point was released for public consultation on 17 October 2022 for a period of over 13 weeks. There was general community and industry support for the draft master plan and draft port overlay and no significant changes were requested to be made to the two draft documents. Wording changes and updates to figures have been made to further improve the final version of the documents in response to the submissions.

The final master plan and final port overlay identify land and marine areas critical to the ongoing operation of the priority port, recognising its significant economic importance to the region. The master planning process provides a plan for the future sustainable growth of the priority Port of Abbot Point, while including measures that protect the OUV of the GBRWHA and other critical environmental values.

This report has been prepared in accordance with section 45 of the Ports Act. It has been published on the department’s website to outline the matters raised in submissions and how they have informed the preparation of the final master plan and final port overlay.

For more information on master planning for the priority Port of Abbot Point visit: [www.tmr.qld.gov.au/SustainablePorts-AbbotPoint](http://www.tmr.qld.gov.au/SustainablePorts-AbbotPoint)

# Appendix A – Response to Submissions

## 1. Refinements of the draft master plan, draft port overlay and evidence base report – content and mapping

| **Matters raised** | **Master plan** | **Port overlay** | **Evidence Base Report** | **Response** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Wording changes were suggested to improve the information presented in the master planning documents. | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | The master plan and port overlay have been amended with wording changes to improve the detail, presentation and clarity of information in the text and tables.  The objectives of the changes are to:   * expand on information provided, particularly with regard to state policy and legislative requirements * provide clarity of the information presented * reinforce the policy intent of the master planning program, being to strike a balance between sustainable port development and the protection of environmental, cultural and social values in and surrounding the master planned area * incorporate biodiversity as part of the desired outcomes under the Environment State Interest in Table 3 of the master plan.   A list of minor wording changes will also be issued as an addendum to the Evidence Base Report to correct a few points of information, principally relating to legislative requirements. |
| Use of "Avoid, mitigate and/or offset" in the Environmental Management Framework (EMF). | 🗸 | 🗸 |  | To better reflect the hierarchy provided in the State Planning Policy (SPP) under the biodiversity state interest, these words have been changed to "avoid, minimise and offset". |
| Suggestions to identify additional potential impacts and to improve the environmental protection provided by the draft master plan's EMF (Part D). | 🗸 | 🗸 |  | Appendix D of the draft master plan identifies the potential impacts on environmental values from potential development activities.  Updates have been made to Appendix D to identify additional potential impacts on environmental values including disturbance of historic mining sites, smothering of marine organisms and marine plants from offshore disposal of dredged material.  Matters of State Environmental Significance, including regulated vegetation, have been specifically identified as one of the environmental values to be protected. |
| Clarifications of the state interests for the environment under the SPP. | 🗸 |  |  | The master plan identifies the state interests to provide a clear, consolidated and comprehensive view of the interests of the state in port-related development within the master planned area. This is in accordance with the Ports Act which identifies the state interests as matters that are affected or likely to be affected by existing uses in the master planned area and from future development at or for the priority port.  The state interests associated with the environment at the priority Port of Abbot Point cover the protection of the OUV of the GBRWHA, Caley Valley Wetland and other environmental values. The master plan also highlights the state interest for the protection of the health and resilience of biological diversity and ecological processes, cultural heritage and water quality. |
| Highlight to potential developers some aspects of development assessment that need to be considered early, such as land tenure and fisheries resources. | 🗸 |  |  | Additional information within Part C (master planned area and precincts) has been included on land tenure requirements for any proposed uses or development areas as well as native title requirements as part of the master plan's overview on the precincts.  Additional information has been added in Part D under potential impacts from development, noting that fisheries resources, including marine plants, are likely to be present on and adjacent to tidal lands (areas below Highest Astronomical Tide) and that proposed development need to comply with the State Development Assessment Provisions relating to protection of marine plants and construction or raising waterway barriers. |
| Updates to figures and the associated data references for the mapping. | 🗸 |  |  | Figures and infographs in Appendix B were updated to reflect the latest available data sources of the master plan.  Updates have been made to the references for the key data sets outlined in Table 5. |
| Anchorages and shipping are not specifically covered in the draft master plan. Direct and indirect impacts may result from increased shipping activity. | 🗸 |  |  | Anchorages: Anchorages do not involve marine infrastructure and are designated by the Regional Harbour Master in consultation with the GBR Marine Park Authority. Because they are managed as an operational matter, they were considered outside the scope of the current master planning process.  Shipping: Abbot Point is a natural deep-water port. It does not have a defined shipping channel. Potential impacts from increases in shipping activity will need to be assessed as part of the state and Commonwealth assessment of any major port project when specific details become available. |

## 2. Protection of the Caley Valley Wetland

| **Matters raised** | **Master plan** | **Port overlay** | **Response** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Protect environmental values of the Caley Valley Wetland. | 🗸 | 🗸 | Master planning applies a precinct-based approach which identifies areas suitable for long-term industrial development and areas where environmental values are to be predominately considered.  The master plan and port overlay protect environmental values in and surrounding the master planned area, including the Caley Valley Wetland, through the designation of an Environmental Management Precinct which is over 50 per cent of the total land area of the master planned area.  Additionally, comprehensive environmental requirements are nominated under the specified Outcomes and Environmental Management Framework (EMF) Objective for each precinct. |
| The location of the designated Infrastructure and Supply Chain Corridor Precinct. | 🗸 | 🗸 | The corridor is designated across the wetland area to allow connection to the port.  This corridor, shown in the precinct mapping, is of strategic importance to Queensland and is critical to operation of the Abbot Point State Development Area and to the priority Port of Abbot Point. It is necessary to support future exports from industry located in the Abbot Point State Development Area through to the port and offshore facilities.  Representing less than one per cent of the master planned land area, the length and width of the corridor has been kept to the smallest workable footprint.  Under the master plan and port overlay, the outcomes required for any development in the precinct include the protection of the environmental and cultural values and hydrological functions of the Caley Valley Wetland. Development assessment processes as required by legislation remain a requirement for any proposals within the master planned area.  A Coordinated Management Strategy (CMS) for the Caley Valley Wetland is a Priority Management Measure (PMM) under the master plan and port overlay to support protection of the Wetland into the future. |
| Caley Valley Wetland Coordinated Management Strategy. |  | 🗸 | The CMS represents a PMM that will support the long term protection of the Caley Valley Wetland.  The entities responsible for the PMM are North Queensland Bulk Ports Corporation Limited and the Coordinator-General as authorities responsible for decision making under the regulatory instruments – Port of Abbot Point Land Use Plan and Abbot Point State Development Area Development Scheme.  Clarification has been provided to highlight that other relevant Queensland Government agencies and those reviewing environmental impact statements and development applications, will be consulted during the development of the CMS. |

## 3. Cumulative Impact Management

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Matters raised** | **Master plan** | **Port overlay** | **Response** |
| It was stated that a cumulative impact assessment will be necessary to understand the impact of new port infrastructure and development. | 🗸 |  | Cumulative impact management is addressed in Part A (Context) of the master plan, which recognises the importance of the management of system-wide cumulative impacts on the GBR. A range of policy initiatives to achieve this are documented. It is reinforced in the master plan that when a proposed development is likely to contribute to pressures on GBR values, cumulative impacts need to be considered in line with the "*Reef 2050 Plan – Cumulative Impact Management Policy*."  Additional references to the Reef 2050 Net-Benefit and Cumulative Impact Management policies have now been included for completeness. |
| Support for master planning and its role in enabling growth of the emerging renewable energy industry at the priority Port of Abbot Point. | 🗸 | 🗸 | The Queensland Government acknowledges the support for master planning at the priority Port of Abbot Point and its role in the planning regime for managing sustainable development in the master planned area and to support emerging industries, such as green hydrogen production and export.  Specifically, precincts such as the Port, Industry and Commerce Precinct will facilitate future infrastructure planning at the priority Port of Abbot Point, providing certainty and opportunities for emerging Queensland industries that will support a net zero-emissions global economy. |

# Appendix B – Media

A summary of the Queensland Government media used to raise community awareness of the public consultation and how to make a submission is provided below:

25 October 2022 – Facebook post from Minister for Transport and Main Roads

* A Facebook post uploaded to encourage Queenslanders to have their say on the Abbot Point draft master plan and draft port overlay, with links to the master planning website pages.

26 October 2022 – Seven News Mackay

* A proactive television interview with the Minister was undertaken, outlining the launch of the draft master plan and draft port overlay at the priority Port of Abbot Point for public consultation, and highlighting the importance of sustainable development at the ports.
* The Minister mentioned hydrogen at the Port of Abbot Point for a cleaner, renewable future of the state.
* The Minister encouraged people to make a submission on the draft documents by heading to TMR's website.

4 November 2022 – Newspaper article in Daily Mercury – Mackay, "Feedback sought on priority port master plans."

* A proactive media piece from the Minister requesting feedback on the priority port master plans was prepared.

16 November 2022 – TMR post

* A Facebook post was uploaded to encourage Queenslanders to have their say on the Abbot Point draft master plan and draft port overlay, with links to the master planning website pages, and the opportunity to talk to a project officer at the Abbot Point master planning public information sessions at a community venue in Bowen.

11 December 2022 – Facebook Post – Port Planning Consultation Extended

* The Minister posted that the consultation period for Abbot Point would be extended until mid-January and encouraged people to make submissions.