

## Strategic policy

### Recreational water quality management

Corporate Plan reference:	<p><b>A healthy environment</b></p> <p><i>Maintaining and enhancing the region's natural assets, liveability and environmental credentials</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Protection and enhancement of our natural assets and distinctive landscapes</li> </ul>
Endorsed by CEO on:	16/03/16
Manager responsible for policy:	Manager Environment and Sustainability Policy, Liveability and Natural Assets Group

### Policy purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish an approach to managing water quality at popular Sunshine Coast beaches and river recreational locations.

### Policy outcome

The outcome sought is that the Sunshine Coast's waterways and coastal foreshores continue to be valued, healthy and enjoyed.

### Policy scope

This policy covers popular coastal recreational waters, including beach and estuary locations, where large numbers of people engage in contact activities, for example, swimming, and where access is supported by council or other agencies.

This policy does not cover waterways or drainage features that flow into recreational waterways. Nor does it cover suitability of water quality for ecological functions, for example, supporting aquatic wildlife.

### Background

A recent water quality monitoring program undertaken by council and Unitywater showed that water quality is typically good at local open beaches and good or marginal at estuarine sites, with higher risks after rainfall. These results are consistent with findings from other parts of the region and Australia.

The monitoring has confirmed that public health advisory messages recently developed for South-east Queensland recreational locations, informed by work in other states, are applicable to our local waterways and users. Therefore, promotion of those messages is an appropriate strategy for managing public health risks at recreational water locations.

## Policy statement

Council's approach to managing recreational water quality is underpinned by the following key activities:

- partnering with other agencies to investigate and inform the community about higher-risk pollution sources such as leaks and overflows from urban sewer networks;
- participating in the regional Healthy Waterplay Program and advocating for increased community education through the program; and
- promoting common-sense behaviours for safer recreation in coastal waterways<sup>1</sup>, for example, through content on council's website and responses to community enquiries.

## Guiding principles

Management of water quality and public health at recreational-water locations supports the desired corporate outcome of *well-managed waterways and foreshore assets*.

Relevant principles guiding council's management of natural waterways and coastal foreshores are set out in the *Sunshine Coast Waterways and Coastal Management Strategy 2011–2021* and include the following:

- Management is best conducted in partnership with government, industry non government organisations and the community.
- Water quality in the coastal zone is maintained at a standard that protects and maintains coastal ecosystems and their ability to support human use.
- Management adheres to the principles of adaptive management whereby available data, emerging technologies and the effectiveness of implemented initiatives inform future projects.

Version control:

Version	Reason/ Trigger	Change (Y/N)	Endorsed/ Reviewed by	Date
1.0	New policy	n/a	Bill Haddrill	12/02/15
1.1	Update as per new Organisational Structure		Corporate Governance	21/11/2017

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<sup>1</sup> Common-sense behaviours recommended for safer recreation are the following top tips from the regional Healthy Waterplay Program:

- a. Avoid primary contact recreation (such as swimming) in waterways during and at least one day after heavy rain in open waterways and beaches, and for at least three days within confined bays and estuaries.
- b. Always avoid primary contact recreation in or near stormwater drains.
- c. Look out for indicators of pollution before entering waterways including discoloured or strong smelling water, and floating litter, scum or debris.
- d. Avoid primary contact recreation in waterways if you have an open wound or infection.
- e. Look for posted warning signs and follow the advice on them.