Sunshine Coast Council

Shorebird Conservation Plan 2025-30
Community Engagement Summary

Sunshine Coast COUNCIL

Edition March 2025

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Reference document

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Introduction

The Sunshine Coast provides important habitat for migratory and resident shorebirds, where they share limited coastal habitat areas with a fast-growing urban community. Much of the region's rapidly growing population (predicted to exceed 500,000 by 2041) lives along the urban growth corridor between Caloundra and Maroochydore - areas that are also important for shorebirds.

Most shorebird species are rapidly declining. Global threats include habitat loss, climate change and sea-level rise. On the Sunshine Coast, disturbance by people and domestic animals presents the biggest threat (for details see Shorebird Conservation Plan Attachment 2: Background Paper). Any disturbance to migratory shorebirds severely impacts their ability to build the energy reserves needed for their long journeys and breeding season in the Arctic. Effective conservation of these species depends on local management that balances our enjoyment of coastal areas with the ecological values that make them unique. Protecting existing habitat, especially high tide roost sites, is the most cost-effective and impactful way to support shorebird conservation at the local level.

Council's shorebird conservation program was established in July 2020 and has since developed significantly, achieving important milestones in community engagement and education, monitoring, and research. Five years of monitoring has provided important data on species abundance, habitat availability, and threatening processes.

To ensure the program keeps achieving outcomes consistent with council policy, conservation advice, and community expectations, the current program was reviewed, and a new draft Shorebird Conservation Plan was developed to guide the program for the next five years.

Primary Stakeholder Engagement

In July 2024, Council hosted a workshop with primary stakeholders involved in shorebird conservation to develop a local threat assessment and derive proposed actions to address those threats.

The workshop comprised relevant participants from the Queensland Department of Environment, Tourism, Science, and Innovation (DETSI), Queensland Parks and Wildlife Services (QPWS), University of Queensland, University of the Sunshine Coast, Sunshine Coast Council, Queensland Wader Study Group (QWSG), and Kabi Kabi Peoples Aboriginal Corporation (KKPAC).

Key themes that emerged from the stakeholder workshop include:

- The need to act now, to protect critically endangered shorebird species and the habitat critical to their survival before it is too late for their populations to recover.
- The importance of minimising or eliminating disturbance, the main threat to shorebird species locally.
- Acknowledgment of the important achievements by SCC to date, through community engagement and data collection.

- The importance of engaging with the community to work with an informed and supportive community towards conservation outcomes.
- Finding a balance between environmental conservation and recreation needs for the community.
- Collaboration between different levels of government to achieve positive outcomes in areas of shared jurisdictions.
- The importance of sufficient funding to implement and enforce proposed actions for the Shorebird Conservation Plan to be effective.

Community Engagement

Have Your Say

A dedicated Have Your Say website was developed for broad community engagement on the draft Shorebird Conservation Plan. Community engagement via the Have Your Say (HYS) page was held from 21 October – 18 November 2024.

The engagement was widely advertised on various platforms (**Table 1**).

Date	Activity
21 October – 18 November 2024	Have Your Say (HYS) page live
21 October 2024	Registered members of HYS receive an email about the project (2,220 recipients)
21 October 2024	Advertising on home page of Council's website
21 October 2024	Direct link to HYS at the top of Council's Shorebird website
21 October 2024	Story on OurSC.com.au
24 October 2024	Council e-newsletter (15k subscribers)
24 October	Radio interviews on ABC
21 October – 15 November	Three to four posts each on Council's Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIN and X page
21 October – 18 November	Social media advertising on Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIN to reach people who don't follow Council on Facebook.
29 October 2024	Media stories in Sunshine Coast Daily and Sunshine Coast News
3-9 November 2024	Radio advertising – Hot91.1, MixFM and SEA FM
6 November 2024	Coolum Advertiser – print ad

Table 1: Advertisement of Community Engagement Activities

The HYS page included a survey for people to provide feedback on the draft Shorebird Conservation Plan, and included the following items:

- Users were asked to assign a priority to 6 proposed actions including an option to provide additional comments.
- Users were asked to what extent they agreed that the draft Shorebird Conservation Plan will achieve its vision including an option to provide additional comments.

In a separate activity, users could post what actions they will take to support shorebird conservation.

Users were also asked for demographic information, and how frequently they visit the open beaches or one of the main shorebird habitat areas.

Methods

All submissions were read and analysed by a council officer. All HYS submissions were additionally analysed by AI technology, with further review and validation to ensure the accuracy of the analysis undertaken by officers.

Theme extraction methodology

A multi-step process was carried out to generate a concise list of themes from the large amount of survey responses.

1. Each survey response was passed to the Large Language Model to extract a list of key issues. This resulted in a set of 785 issues.

2. Many identified issues were similar but used slightly different wording. A process known as clustering was undertaken to group like issues together to condense and reduce the list. Three iterations provided a final set of 19 theme clusters. An additional theme cluster of "Other" was included to capture outliers.

3. A title and summary description for each of the 20 themes was created in the final step by prompting the large language model to analyse the related issues from the initial set of 785 issues to generate a plain language description.

Engagement Results

Submissions

632 valid submissions were received via the Have your Say page and 18 submissions were received via email.

It was evident from both analyses that around 40-45% of all free text comments were related to a misinformed perception that Council was planning to close the entire Mudjimba dog off-leash area. While those responses did not relate to the draft Shorebird Conservation Plan directly, they were still included in the analysis of submissions.

Demographics

The largest age groups of respondents were between 35-49 and 50-59 years old (**Figure 1**).

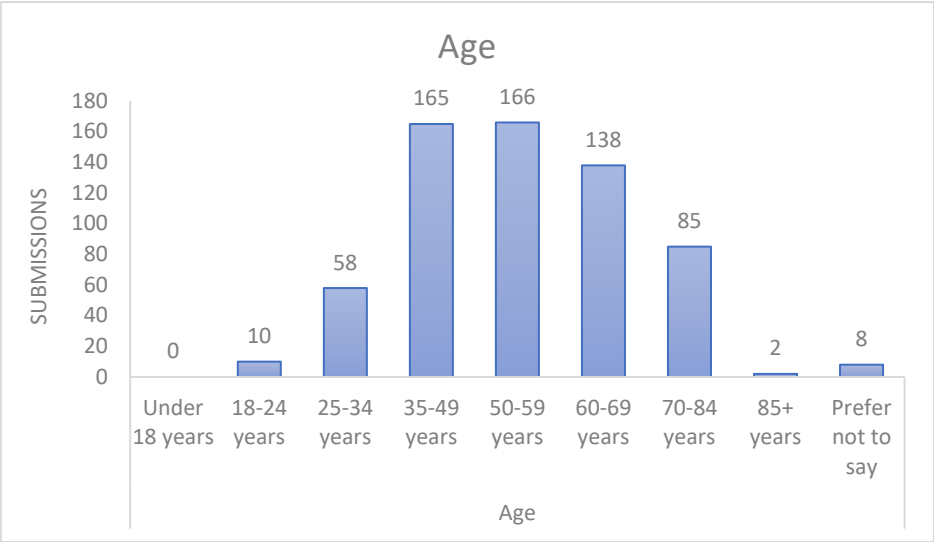


Figure 1: Age distribution of HYS respondents. Data labels represent numbers of submissions for each age group.

Submissions were received from 105 different suburbs, with the top 20 shown in **Figure 2**.

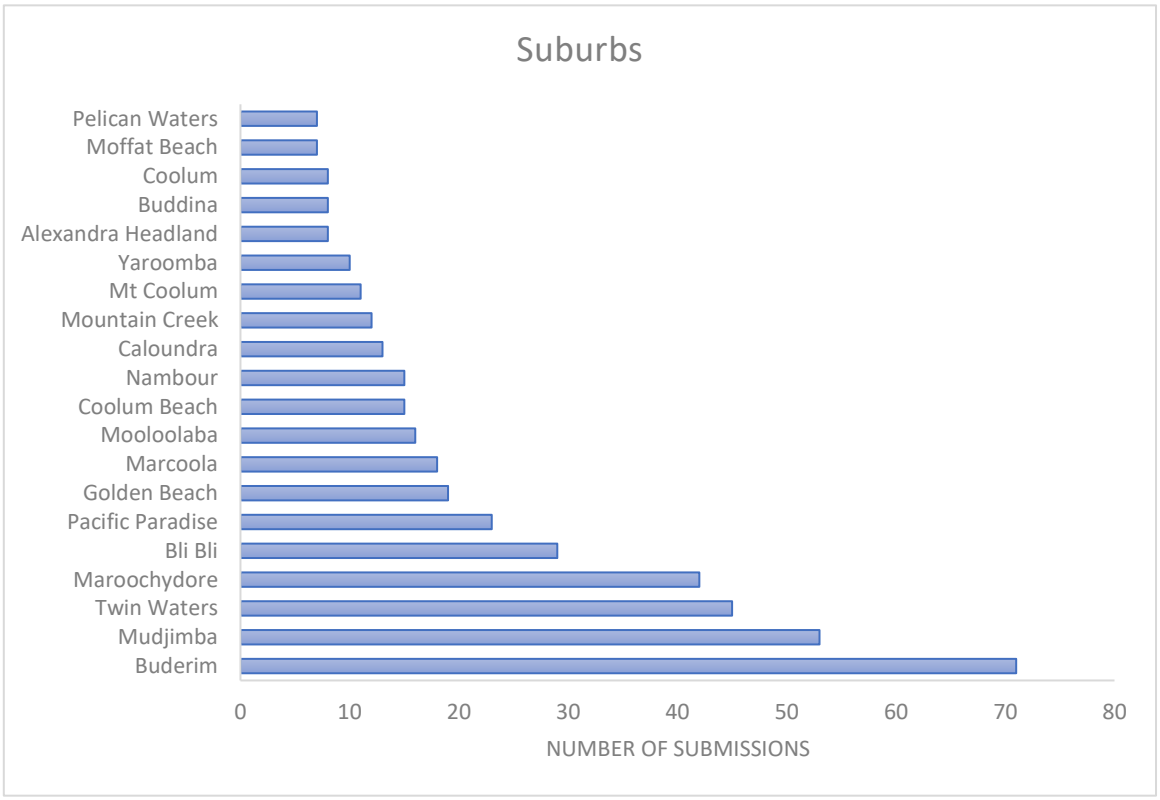


Figure 2: The 20 suburbs with the highest number of submissions.

Most respondents visit the open beaches daily or weekly (**Figure 3**).

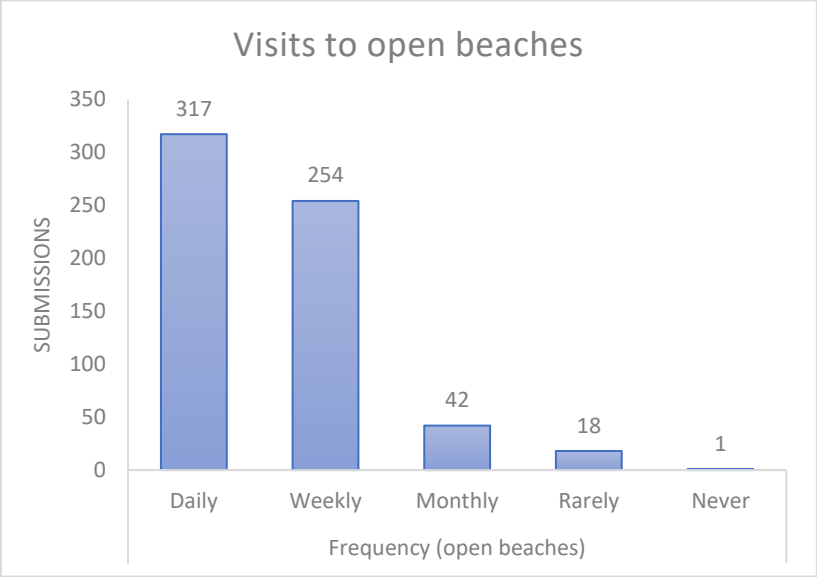


Figure 3: Visitation frequency to open beaches. Data labels represent the number of submissions for each option.

Respondents visit the estuaries at Maroochy River and Pumicestone Passage slightly less frequently than the open beaches (**Figure 4**).

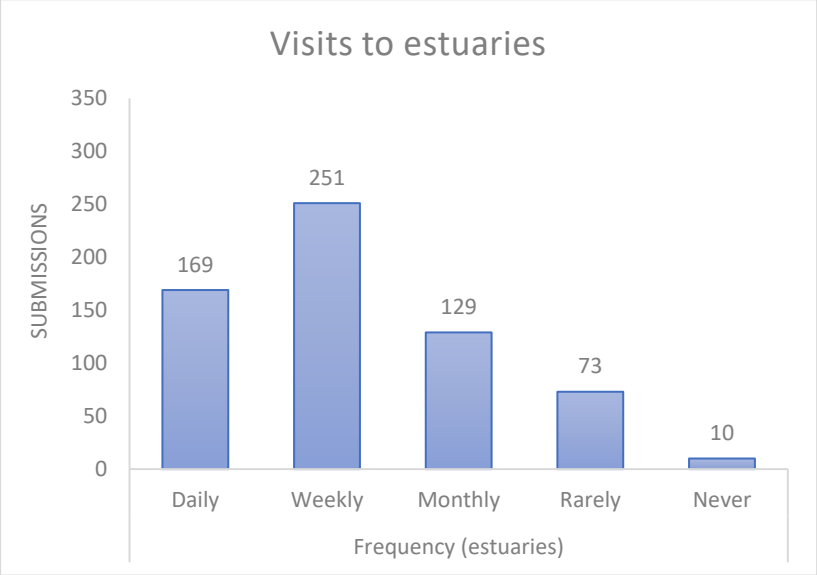


Figure 4: Visitation frequency to estuaries. Data labels represent the number of submissions for each option.

Community feedback

44% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the draft Shorebird Conservation Plan will support the recovery of shorebird populations (**Figure 5**). 34% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, 17% were neutral and 5% didn't know.

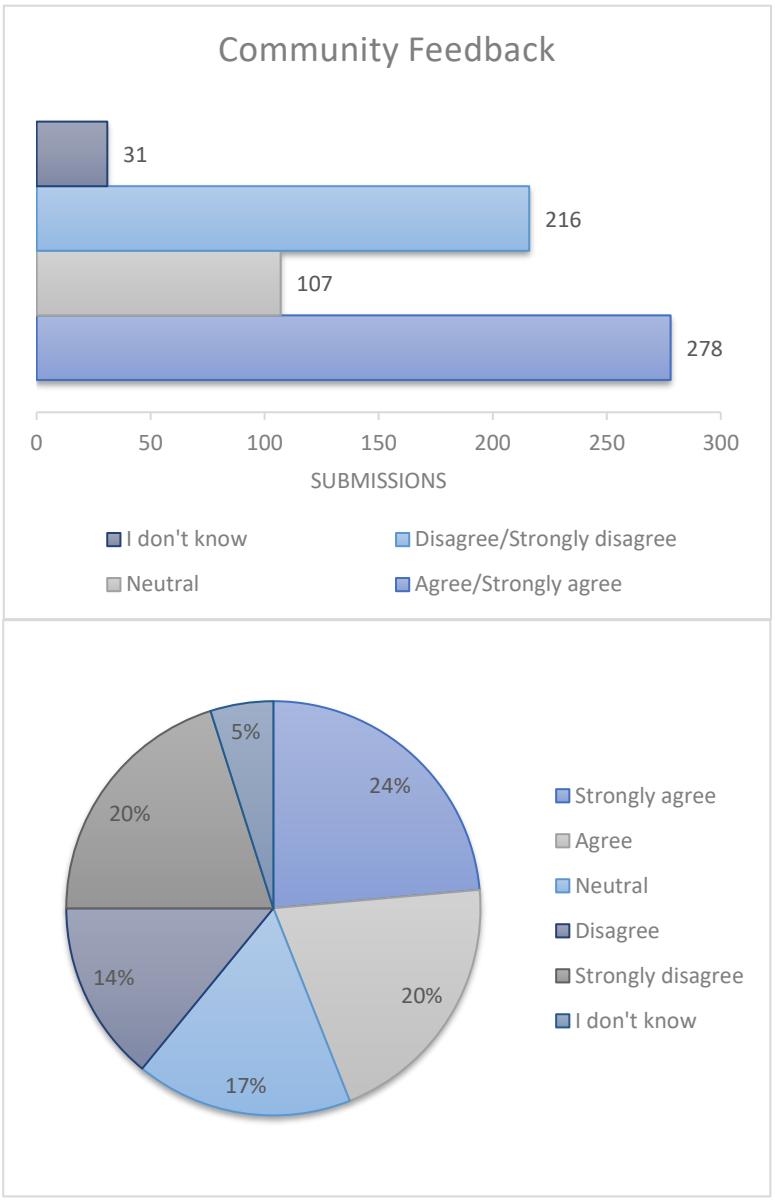


Figure 5: Community response to the draft Shorebird Conservation Plan. Data labels indicate number of submissions for each option.

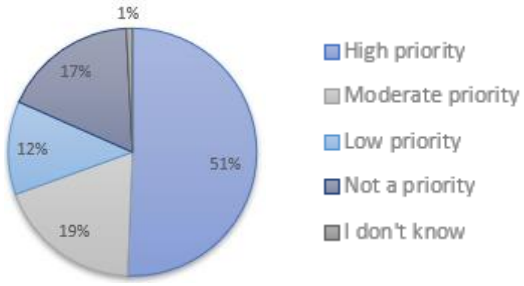
Prioritisation of proposed actions

Respondents were asked to assign priority ratings to six key actions proposed in the draft plan.

Five of the six actions were assigned 'High Priority' with the highest proportion of votes. Action 4.6 (Provide guided shorebird viewing experiences) was the only action with most votes going to 'Not a priority'.

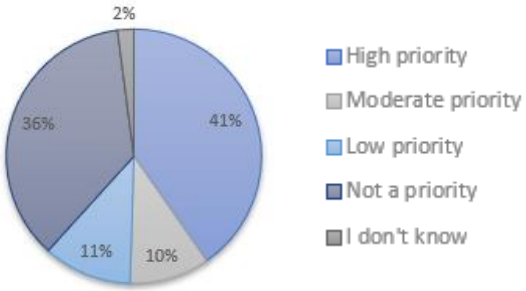
Action 1.1 and 1.2 - Conduct assessment of shorebird habitat to identify high value shorebird habitat areas for roosting, feeding, and nesting. Map and declare identified high value shorebird habitat and improve site protection.

High priority	320
Moderate priority	119
Low priority	77
Not a priority	111
I don't know	5



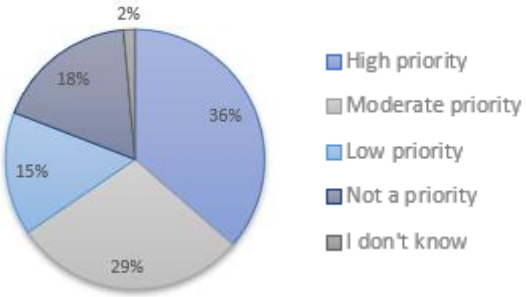
Action 1.3 - Close high value shorebird roost sites to the public between October and April.

High priority	255
Moderate priority	64
Low priority	71
Not a priority	229
I don't know	13



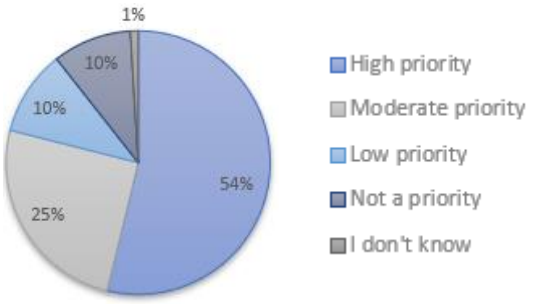
Action 4.2 - Create a volunteer citizen science group to monitor beach-nesting shorebirds and assess their breeding success as well as egg and chick survival.

High priority	230
Moderate priority	184
Low priority	97
Not a priority	112
I don't know	9



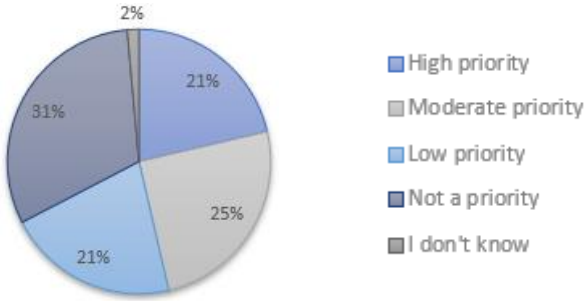
Action 4.3 - Continue to use temporary and permanent interpretive signage to educate the community and raise awareness for shorebird conservation.

High priority	340
Moderate priority	159
Low priority	66
Not a priority	61
I don't know	6



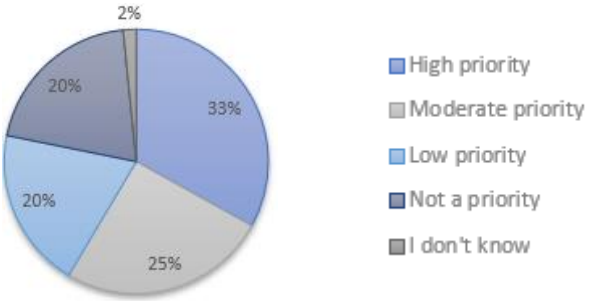
Action 4.6 - Provide guided shorebird viewing experiences for the community.

High priority	135
Moderate priority	158
Low priority	133
Not a priority	197
I don't know	9



Action 4.7 - Empower community members to become local shorebird conservation champions to promote good behaviours in their local area.

High priority	209
Moderate priority	161
Low priority	124
Not a priority	128
I don't know	10



Responses to 'What action will you take?'

Only 20 responses were received to this activity and are listed below.

I will continue to stay clear of shorebirds to eliminate the risks of disruption to their feeding, roosting and breeding.
Pls provide councils "protection protocols" in line with National Airports safeguarding framework, your proposed location is within 3 km rad
I observe shorebirds on the Gold Coast and have a database of 3000 records covering 40 different sites. This is the basis of my bird guide.
I will keep my dog out of the dunes, but I urge the council not to take away off leash dog areas unless replacing them with additional ones.
Advocate for the responsible conservation of threatened species that have specialised habitats that need protecting.
I will continue to pick up rubbish from fishermen, campers (even though they shouldn't be camping there) rubbish washed in from the ocean.
Please do not take away the dog area many people use the space plus it's a great family area for little kids with dogs and families.
I always take back what I bring to the area, picking up anything along the way. Stay to the tracks and don't allow dogs to wander into bush.
I ensure my dog is controlled and does not disturb wildlife. I pick up rubbish that can impact wildlife. Do not restrict dogs off leash.
I've been walking my dogs down North Shore for 30 years. What did the shorebirds do when they built Twin Waters there was no shrubbery.
Ensure my dog is controlled and does not chase or disturb wildlife. Pick up rubbish that must impact on land and water creatures.
Keep dogs under control
I will keep my dog under my control however I disagree with restricting the use of North Shore off leash area
Not disturb them. They depend on the shore for food, rest, mating & temporary shelter.
History has shown that locking something up and away from the public ultimately leads to its decline. I will fight to stop the lockout.
I will expect Council to implement an appropriate balance between shorebird conservation, human rights and beach access for man and dog!
I will expect Council to find an acceptable balance between wildlife protection and the strong desire of the community to keep a dog beach.
I will continue volunteering as a Wader and Shorebird counter doing our monthly surveys of the Pumicestone Passage and listing disturbances.
I will continue volunteering as a Wader and Shorebird counter doing our monthly surveys of the Pumicestone Passage and listing disturbances.
Promote your actions across Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group (ESRAG) OCEANIA COMMUNITY.

Theme extraction (AI generated and validated by officers)

1. **Balancing conservation and Recreation:** The feedback highlights a strong community desire to find a balanced approach to shorebird conservation that does not overly restrict recreational activities, particularly dog walking, on beaches. Many community members express concerns about the potential for conservation efforts to limit access to valued recreational spaces, such as beaches and riverfronts, which have traditionally been shared by both people and shorebirds. The feedback suggests that a collaborative approach, involving comprehensive studies and community engagement, is necessary to develop a conservation plan that accommodates both the protection of shorebirds and the recreational needs of the community. There is a call for nuanced strategies that allow for coexistence, such as designating specific areas for conservation while keeping other areas open for recreation and promoting responsible dog ownership to minimize negative impacts on shorebirds.

Council response: Council recognises the need to balance conservation and recreation values for our community. Council will provide recommendations to the draft Dog Exercise Area Regional Plan on how to effectively manage and balance shorebird conservation outcomes and maintain recreation outcomes where possible, including consideration for provision of alternate locations for dog exercise areas where prohibition of dogs is recommended to protect shorebirds and their habitat.

2. **Balancing Dog Beach access and shorebird conservation:** The feedback highlights a significant concern among community members regarding the potential closure of dog-friendly beaches due to shorebird conservation efforts. Respondents' express dissatisfaction with the proposed restrictions, emphasizing the importance of maintaining access to these recreational areas for dogs and their owners. Many suggest that the current conservation plan does not adequately balance the needs of shorebird protection with the recreational and mental health benefits provided by off-leash dog areas. There is a strong call for alternative solutions, such as limiting access to specific nesting areas, providing alternative dog-friendly locations, or implementing timed access to ensure both shorebird conservation and community needs are met. The feedback reflects a desire for a more balanced approach that considers the social, environmental, and economic impacts of such decisions.

Council response: Council recognises the community's values regarding shorebird conservation and recreation, particularly in relation to dog walking. Analysis of responses revealed 40-45% of all free text comments were related to a misinformed perception that Council was planning to close the entire Mudjimba dog off-leash area. However, as outlined in the draft Dog Exercise Area Regional Plan, Council proposed a seasonal closure of approx. 500m along the southern end of the beach, while retaining off-leash access to the river and beach side, as well as the on-leash loop walk. In addition, a new off-leash area of approx. 670m is proposed to be established just north of the existing off-leash area to offset the seasonal loss.

3. **Community Support for Shorebird Conservation Plan:** The feedback overwhelmingly supports the draft Shorebird Conservation Plan, highlighting its comprehensive nature and the appropriateness of its proposed actions. Many respondents commend the plan for addressing key conservation challenges and express gratitude for the initiative. There is a strong sense of

community backing, with suggestions and concerns being actively shared. While most feedback is positive, acknowledging the plan as a well-thought-out and important environmental step, there are some concerns about its long-term success. Overall, the community shows a fondness for shorebirds and a commitment to their protection, appreciating the council's efforts in prioritizing nature conservation.

Council response: Council recognises the community support for the draft Shorebird Conservation Plan and will work closely with the community to achieve positive outcomes.

4. **Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation:** The feedback highlights the need for a more inclusive and comprehensive approach to wildlife conservation on the Sunshine Coast. The feedback indicates that the current shorebird protection plan is too narrow, focusing primarily on dogs and human activities, and neglects broader environmental issues and other wildlife species. Respondents call for a plan that considers all fauna and flora, including non-migratory birds, possums, and EPBC listed seabirds, to ensure biodiversity objectives are met. The feedback stresses the importance of long-term strategies, clear information on migratory and resident species, and the efficient use of council resources to benefit the maximum number of species. It also points out the need to identify and protect key conservation areas, considering the ecological crossover between species and the increasing human population.

Council response: Council acknowledges the need for comprehensive and long-term conservation planning. Council's Environment and Liveability Strategy 2023 provides high level direction for environmental conservation, including through the following policies: Environmental Reserves Network Management Plan, draft Healthy Coast Management Plan, Marine Turtle Conservation Plan, Macropod Conservation Plan, Koala Conservation Plan, Biodiversity Plan, Biosecurity Plan. Council also provides opportunities for the community to engage in conservation and citizen science efforts through programs like BushCare, TurtleCare, Land for Wildlife, and through the Environmental Visitor Centres.

5. **Concerns Over Funding and Resource Allocation for Shorebird Protection:** The feedback highlights significant concerns regarding the allocation of funds and resources for the Shorebird Protection Plan. Many ratepayers' express distress over the perceived mismanagement of taxpayer money, emphasizing the need for transparency and clarity in budget planning. There is a strong call for the Council to prioritize effective use of funds, ensuring that sufficient resources are allocated to enforce the plan's actions. Additionally, the feedback reflects dissatisfaction with the current expenditure on consultants and infrastructure, urging a re-evaluation of spending priorities to enhance community quality of life.

Council response: Council recognises the current cost of living crisis and the need for efficient and transparent budget planning. The Shorebird Conservation program is currently funded through the Environment Levy. The successful delivery of the draft Shorebird Conservation Plan will require a minimal increase of Environment Levy project funding, which is considered by Council on an annual basis. Additional funding opportunities through grants and sponsors are also investigated.

6. **Conservation vs. Development Conflict:** The feedback highlights a significant tension between urban development and the conservation of shorebird habitats. Community members

express concerns over the impact of nearby airports, housing developments, and recreational activities on shorebird populations. There is a perceived inconsistency in the council's approach, where development is often prioritized over environmental protection, leading to habitat destruction. The feedback calls for a more integrated conservation plan that considers both human and wildlife needs, emphasizing the importance of limiting development near critical habitats. Additionally, there is a call for greater transparency and consistency in conservation efforts, with some community members questioning the effectiveness and focus of current plans.

Council response: Council strives to find a balance between developments and conservation in a fast-growing region. A consistent and transparent approach is guided by the Planning Scheme and the Environment and Liveability Strategy 2023 and associated policies (see above, Theme 4).

7. Cynicism Towards Consultation Process: The feedback reveals a significant level of distrust and dissatisfaction among community members regarding the Shorebird Conservation Plan. Concerns are raised about the accessibility and transparency of the feedback survey, which is perceived as biased and leading, failing to capture the nuanced views of the community. There is a strong sentiment that the consultation process is merely performative, with decisions perceived as pre-determined by the council lacking genuine community engagement. The feedback highlights a perceived imbalance in addressing the needs of different stakeholders, particularly dog owners, and questions the effectiveness and sincerity of the conservation efforts. Additionally, there is a call for more detailed and transparent communication from the council, with a demand for accountability and a more inclusive approach to decision-making.

Council response: Council values feedback from the community, as reflected by wide-ranging consultation for this draft plan. All feedback received for this draft plan has been analysed and taken into consideration to finalise the plan.

8. Demand for Alternative Dog-Friendly Areas: The feedback highlights a significant concern among dog owners regarding the restrictions imposed on dog-friendly beach areas due to shorebird conservation efforts. Many dog owners feel that their needs are being overlooked, as they require ample space for their pets to exercise, especially for high-energy breeds. The community suggests that instead of outright bans, a more balanced approach should be adopted. This includes creating more exercise enclosures, adjusting dog-friendly areas during nesting periods, and extending off-leash areas to accommodate both wildlife protection and the recreational needs of dogs. There is a call for councils to consider alternative solutions, such as opening new dog parks and extending off-leash times, to ensure that the needs of both the environment and the community are met.

Council response: Council will provide recommendations to the draft Dog Exercise Area Regional Plan on how to effectively manage and balance shorebird conservation outcomes and maintain recreation outcomes where possible, including consideration for provision of alternate locations for dog exercise areas where prohibition of dogs is recommended to protect shorebirds and their habitat.

9. Enforcement and Balance in Shorebird Management: The feedback highlights a strong demand for effective enforcement of regulations to protect shorebirds, emphasizing the need for uniform application of access restrictions and consequences for non-compliance. There is a call

for prioritizing enforcement over further surveys, with a focus on managing dogs and cats at sensitive sites to prevent habitat destruction. The community expresses dissatisfaction with current management and stresses the importance of education alongside enforcement to ensure compliance. Suggestions include employing Beach Wardens, utilizing government resources, and improving infrastructure to protect high-value sites. The feedback underscores the necessity of balancing environmental priorities with community needs, urging immediate action and proper resourcing to uphold local laws.

Council response: Council strives to find a balance between community education and enforcement of local laws. Council will work with relevant internal and external stakeholders to enforce regulations to protect shorebirds as required. Improved enforcement of relevant local laws has also been included as a recommendation in the draft Dog Exercise Area Regional Plan.

10. Fencing and Protection of Sensitive Areas: The feedback emphasizes the importance of protecting shorebird habitats with physical barriers such as fences. Respondents suggest fencing off sensitive areas like dunes and roosting sites to prevent human and animal interference, while still allowing for public enjoyment through designated viewing areas with signage and binoculars. The feedback also highlights the need for community involvement and education, proposing information days and shared responsibility initiatives. The overarching goal is to balance conservation efforts with public access, ensuring the protection of shorebird populations and their habitats.

Council response: Council will use educational and regulatory signage to protect important shorebird habitats. Where required and feasible, physical barriers may be considered.

11. Goat Island Shorebird Conservation: The feedback overwhelmingly supports the designation of Goat Island as a primary conservation area for shorebirds. Users highlight its current use by migratory birds and its suitability due to low human interference. The island is recognized as an ideal habitat, offering isolated and untouched areas perfect for nesting and breeding. Concerns about human impact are minimal, with suggestions to restrict public access to enhance conservation efforts. Additionally, the feedback acknowledges the dynamic nature of shorebird habitats, as seen with the new sandbar at Golden Beach, emphasizing the need for adaptable conservation strategies.

Council response: Goat Island is already part of the Maroochy River Conservation Park managed by State Government. Council will work with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service to strengthen protection and enforcement around Goat Island.

12. Impact of Jet Skis and Water Activities on Shorebird Conservation: The feedback emphasizes the urgent need for a holistic approach to shorebird habitat protection, addressing various human activities that threaten these environments. Key concerns include the disturbance caused by 4WD vehicles, watercraft such as jet skis and boats, and other recreational activities near shorebird habitats. The feedback suggests implementing stricter regulations and monitoring systems, such as CCTV and noise surveys, to ensure compliance and minimize disturbances. Additionally, there is a call for community involvement, stakeholder engagement, and educational initiatives to raise awareness about the impact of human activities on shorebirds. The feedback also highlights the importance of protecting both terrestrial and aquatic environments, improving

water quality, and considering the effects of coastal developments. Overall, the feedback advocates for a balanced approach that allows for recreational enjoyment while prioritizing the conservation of shorebird habitats.

Council response: The draft Shorebird Conservation Plan proposes actions to address all relevant human disturbances, including watercraft and water activities. Council will continue to educate the community and work with relevant authorities to reduce the impacts on shorebirds.

13. **Mental Health and Community Well-being at Dog Beaches:** The feedback collectively emphasizes the critical importance of maintaining open, pet-friendly spaces such as beaches and river walks on the Sunshine Coast. These areas are not only vital for the physical exercise of both pets and their owners but also play a significant role in enhancing mental health, providing serenity, and fostering social interactions. The community strongly opposes the closure of these spaces, highlighting their necessity for safe exercise, accessibility, and the mental and social benefits they offer. Concerns are raised about the impact of such closures on individuals who rely on these areas for mental well-being, socialization, and the unique joy and companionship that come from shared experiences with their pets. The feedback questions whether current conservation plans adequately consider the needs of dog owners and the broader community, stressing the need for a balanced approach that preserves these essential spaces.

Council response: Council recognises the importance of adequate dog exercising facilities, and the physical and psychological benefits pet ownership provides. The draft Dog Exercise Area Regional Plan aims to provide well-planned dog exercise areas across the region, while balancing public safety and the environmental, social, and cultural values of our natural spaces.

14. **Need for Enhanced Community Engagement:** The feedback highlights a strong demand for genuine and ongoing community engagement in the development and implementation of the Shorebird Conservation Plan. It emphasizes the importance of involving long-term residents and frequent beach users in the consultation process to gain valuable insights into local issues, such as disturbances to birds caused by dogs. The feedback criticizes the current level of community involvement as inadequate, with calls for better notification and communication with residents. There is a clear desire for the plan to focus on serving the local community's needs and concerns, ensuring meaningful buy-in and active participation. The feedback also stresses the necessity of using multiple engagement methods, including online surveys, to gather diverse perspectives and ensure transparency in decision-making. Overall, the feedback underscores the need for a collaborative approach that prioritizes public consultation and trust-building with the community.

Council response: Council continues to work with the local community throughout the implementation of the draft Shorebird Conservation Plan. Community engagement for the plan was widely advertised (**Table 1**) to ensure reaching a large part of the community. Current community engagement involves educational signage, annual 'Welcome the shorebirds' festivals with activities for the whole family, community presentations, and an interactive shorebird display in the Coastal Discovery Van. The draft Shorebird Conservation Plan proposes to build on this foundation and expand community engagement by creating a volunteer citizen science group,

supporting guided shorebird viewing experiences, providing free and accessible shorebird observation facilities, as well as developing a shorebird program for schools.

15. **Restricting Dogs to Protect Shorebirds:** The feedback overwhelmingly emphasizes the need for stringent restrictions on dogs in areas critical to shorebird conservation. Many contributors advocate for permanent bans on dogs in specific zones, especially during migratory and nesting seasons, to prevent disturbances to shorebirds. Concerns are raised about dogs running off-leash, chasing birds, and causing habitat destruction, with suggestions for designated dog parks and exclusion zones. While some feedback questions the necessity of such measures, the consensus leans towards prioritizing shorebird protection over recreational dog activities.

Council response: Council recognises the threat of dogs on shorebirds as addressed in the draft Shorebird Conservation Plan and draft Dog Exercise Area Regional Plan.

16. **Shorebird Conservation Education and Enforcement:** The feedback emphasizes the critical need for community education and enforcement to protect shorebirds. It highlights the importance of educating dog owners, tourists, and the public about the impact of human and pet activities on shorebird habitats. The feedback suggests implementing educational programs in schools, distributing informative materials, and installing effective signage to raise awareness. Additionally, it calls for stricter enforcement of leash laws and penalties for non-compliance to ensure the protection of shorebird nesting sites. The community's involvement and awareness are seen as vital to the success of conservation efforts, with a focus on fostering a sense of shared responsibility and ownership of the protection program.

Council response: Council acknowledges the need for ongoing community education and is grateful for the community support. Desired Outcome 3 of the draft Shorebird Conservation Plan outlines actions for continued community engagement and education.

17. **Shorebird Habitat Protection:** The feedback emphasizes the urgent need for comprehensive conservation measures to protect shorebird habitats, particularly on beaches that could be designated as National Parks. It highlights the importance of differentiating between residential and migratory shorebird locations, reducing light pollution, and addressing threats such as predators and human activities. The feedback calls for stronger council action, continual monitoring by specialists, and prioritizing shorebird needs over local interests to ensure the recovery and sustainability of shorebird populations. It also stresses the importance of protecting these habitats for future generations and managing internationally recognized migratory bird habitats appropriately.

Council response: Council recognises the need to protect shorebird habitat, as addressed in Desired Outcomes 1 and 2 of the draft Shorebird Conservation Plan.

18. **Shorebird Protection Through Access Management:** The feedback highlights the need for a balanced approach to shorebird protection, emphasising the importance of research and community involvement in decision-making. Suggestions include restricting access to specific areas during critical times, such as nesting and roosting seasons, while allowing access when shorebirds are not present. There is a call for innovative conservation measures, like roosting islands, and a focus on high tide roost sites and low tide feeding areas. The feedback also stresses

the importance of managing human and pet disturbances, particularly during breeding seasons, and proposes compromise solutions like weekend closures or local-only access. Community support and clear communication are deemed essential for the success of these conservation efforts.

Council response: Council recognises the need to manage access to important shorebird habitat, as addressed in Desired Outcomes 1 and 2 of the draft Shorebird Conservation Plan.

19. Signage for Shorebird Habitat Protection: The feedback emphasises the importance of using signage and social media to connect the community with shorebird conservation efforts. It highlights the need for accessible maps and information about protected areas, as well as the strategic placement of educational and engaging signage to inform the public without imposing strict restrictions. The community suggests leveraging local news and social media platforms to promote conservation plans and raise awareness. Additionally, there is a call for funding to support these initiatives and for the implementation of temporary and permanent signage to effectively protect shorebird habitats while avoiding permanent closures.

Council response: Council will continue to install temporary and permanent educational and regulatory signage to educate the community and protect important shorebird habitat.

20. Other: The feedback on the Shorebird Conservation Plan is quite diverse and covers several other key themes: the importance of public access to the riverfront, the need for viewing scopes to observe birds, aligning actions in a logical sequence, concerns about avian flu, the impact of climate change, the role of citizen science, the need for greater collaboration and funding, the importance of community engagement, the presence of invasive species, the impact of tourism and economic activities, the need for clear communication and transparency, the significance of habitat protection and regeneration, the role of local wildlife volunteers, the importance of predictive modelling, and the need for effective measurement processes and timelines. Additionally, there are concerns about the impact of domestic cats, the need for legislative amendments, the importance of maintaining food sources, and the potential for increased tourism due to bird watching.

Council response: Council acknowledges the wide range of additional feedback received. Many of those topics are addressed through actions of the draft Shorebird Conservation Plan. Others may not be of highest priority at the moment, however they may be considered during regular reviews of the plan.

Next Steps

Council will consider all community feedback received as part of this engagement to update and finalise the draft Shorebird Conservation Plan.

The final plan will be taken to a Council Ordinary Meeting for consideration.