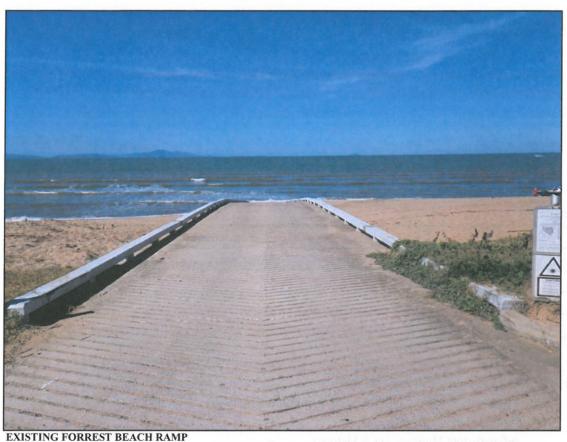


Department of Transport and Main Roads

FORREST BEACH & CASSADY CREEK **BOAT RAMP OPTIONS**



Action statement

Date	Name	Position	Action required	Due date
20/11/2013	Martin Anderson	Principal Engineer	Approval	

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Document sign off

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Table of Definitions

TMR	Department of Transport and Main Roads
HSC	Hinchinbrook Shire Council
GHD	Engineering Consultant GHD
FHA	Fish Habitat Area
LAT	Lowest Astronomical Tide
AHD	Australian Height Datum
CTU	Car Trailer Unit

1 Executive summary

Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) representatives met with Mr Andrew Cripps (Member for Hinchinbrook and Minister for Mines and Natural Resources) along with several local fishermen on 21 June 2013 at Forrest Beach, near Ingham. The fishermen asked Mr Cripps to meet with them to convey their disappointment with the Hinchinbrook Shire Council (council) report on the Forrest Beach boat ramp and apparent lack of proposed action by TMR.

The local fishermen's major concern with the council report was that if it was implemented there would be no protection from waves generated by south-east winds.

The meeting resolved that TMR would look at further options and costs for upgrading the boat launching facility at Forrest Beach as well as the option of constructing a new boat ramp in the nearby Cassady Creek. The existing ramp is in a tributary of Cassady Creek and is only accessible during high tides. It is difficult to navigate as the mangrove canopy hangs low over the narrow creek.



EXISTING CASSADY CREEK RAMP (NOTE LOW HANGING CANOPY)

It is noted that council commissioned engineering consultant GHD to investigate Forrest Beach boat ramp options in 2010. They produced a report, *Forest Beach Boat Ramp Options Report August 2010*, for which they undertook extensive community consultation. The issue of using the Forrest Beach ramp during south-east winds was ruled out by the community as it was explained at the time that the boating community did not use the ramp when south-east winds prevailed. The fishermen consulted with on the 21 June 2013 disagreed with the 2010 community consultation saying that without some protection from the south-east (wave break) there was little point in constructing a wave break for north-easterly waves.

This options analysis confirms that the preference is to leave the Forrest Beach ramp as is and leave council's existing Cassady Creek tributary ramp in place. This is because, in accordance with the recommendations of a state wide GHD demand study of 2011, TMR and council have recently upgraded (2006) the nearby all-weather boat launching facility in the Herbert River at Dungeness. Forrest Beach is approximately 40 minutes driving from Dungeness (20km direct). This falls within the accepted norm (*GHD 2011*) of one hour driving for Australians to access sheltered boating facilities. The ramp at Dungeness is a much safer place to launch and retrieve boats in all weathers and thus attracted TMR and council investment ahead of Taylors Beach and Forrest Beach.

Another option although not preferred would be to install a new ramp at Cassady Creek to supplement the Forrest Beach facility for protected mid to high tide use. This option would require constructing a new road through an environmentally significant area. A new Cassady Creek ramp, if environmentally approved, would be protected from the winds could promote the creek as a recreation facility for the community. The sand bar at the entrance means that there would not be a significant improvement in tidal availability to Forrest Beach, but protection from waves when the tide allows access (mid to high tides only).

A third option would be to extend the Forrest Beach ramp to provide a greater tidal window, but with no change to weather protection and the exposed nature of the beach.

2 Background Information

In 2010, council commissioned engineering consultant GHD to prepare an options report to examine ways to improve the amenity of the boat ramp at Forrest Beach. In summary, the report identified that constraints on the safe use of the ramp were governed by the state of the tide and by the prevailing wave conditions. The report examined several alternative proposals including lengthening the ramp, duplicating the ramp and provision of various sizes and types of wave calming structures. The aim was to increase the usability of the ramp from its current level of being available for only 25% of the time. However none of the proposals that were considered were able to increase the usability to a level more than 50% of the time.

One of the main reasons for this was that the wave calming structure proposed by GHD was designed to provide protection from north-easterly weather rather than the much more common south-easterly weather. The reason why protection from north-easterly weather was considered more important than protection from south-easterly weather was feedback from the community which indicated that the ramp was generally not used during strong south-east conditions. Another reason against providing protection from south-easterly weather is the associated impact on the natural longshore movement of sand, which moves from south to north.

However during the on-site meeting of the 21 June 2013, local residents expressed a desire for protection from south-easterly weather. Accordingly, TMR agreed to investigate and cost this option.

The ramp at Forrest Beach was constructed by TMR as a beach access ramp under the following guideline:

Beach access boat ramps funded by TMR in exposed locations do not commit TMR to provide protection such as breakwaters or to provide dredged access. Part-tide facilities may be provided where there is demand, and dredged access is not feasible. For instance, beach access ramps may be provided where there is sufficient demand and no suitable nearby sheltered waterway.

There are currently 23 TMR-owned open beach ramps or beach access ramps in Queensland. All of these are in exposed locations. None of them were designed or constructed with the intention of future wave protection. Should a protecting breakwater or wave break be provided at Forrest Beach, each of these would require equal future consideration at a cost of approximately \$3-\$8 million per site. Open beach sites have been become fully protected, when incorporated by a developer into a harbour or marina.

The sheltered waters of Hinchinbrook Channel and the Herbert River lie north of Forrest/Taylors Beaches. There is a bar at the entrance to the Herbert River (Dungeness) which restricts access only at very low tides. Taylors Beach offers better shelter than Forrest Beach in south-easterly weather and better land facilities supplied by council. TMR and council provide a major boat launching facility at Dungeness. Since 2006 TMR has upgraded the Dungeness facility by widening the ramp from three to four lanes, installed a floating walkway (requiring additional ramp widening), and upgraded the span-access pontoon, all to serve boaties generally within one hour driving range.

3 Options

At the meeting of 21 June 2013 it was decided to consider additional options to those listed in the GHD report of 2010. The options suggested included consideration of a new boat ramp in Cassady Creek, providing protection against wave action from south-easterly winds and alternate access opportunities at mid to high tides (when wave action may make the Forrest Beach ramp untenable).



APPROXIMATE SITE OF PROPOSED CASSADY CREEK BOAT RAMP

The table on the next page provides conceptual costs and available usage times of these new options and the options previously considered in the GHD report of 2010.

Comments		No protection from NE or SE winds, improved access during calmer conditions.	Protects against NE wind only. Possible sand build-up on ramp due to SE waves.	Protects against NE wind only. Possible sand build-up on ramp due to SE waves.	Protects against SE wind only. Possible sand build-up on ramp due to NE waves.	Protects against SE wind only. Possible sand build-up on ramp due to NE waves.	Significant environmental process to go through. Only 10 car-trailer parks. Water depths at the mouth of the creek vary seasonally and after storms/cyclones
Maintenance Cost	Annual \$30K for ramp	Annual \$30K for ramp w	Annual \$30K for ramp, \$50K F for wave structure, \$100K F for sand by-passing d	Annual \$30K for ramp, \$10K F for breakwater, \$100K for sand by-passing	Annual \$30K for ramp, \$10K F for breakwater, \$300K for sand by-passing	Annual \$30K for ramp, \$10K For for breakwater, \$300K for sand by-passing	Annual \$15K for the boat ramp and \$30K for the car that park and road park and road
Indicative Capital Cost	-	\$1.5M	\$3.8M	\$2.5M	\$3.8M	\$2.5M	\$1.0M (approx 50% each for TMR and council)
Combined Usage	25%	43%	%09	%09	61%	61%	100% - creek use 40% - to access sea (varies)
Wind Availability	25%	92%	%89	%89	77%	%17	100% - creek use 80%- at mouth (varies)
Tidal Availability	46%	%62	%62	%62	%62	%62	100% - creek use 50% to access sea at mouth (at present)
Option Tidal Wind Combined Indicative Availability Availability Usage Capital Cost	Existing Forrest Beach ramp	2. Extension of Forrest Beach ramp by 35m with no wave protection	3. Forrest Beach piled wave structure (67m), NE protection & longer ramp (35m ext)	4. Forrest Beach breakwater (67m) NE protection & longer ramp (35m ext)	5. Forrest Beach piled wave structure (67m) SE protection & longer ramp (35m ext)	6. Forrest Beach breakwater (67m) SE protection & longer ramp (35m ext)	7. Cassady Creek boat ramp & road (10 CTU car park)

4 Constraints and Risks Associated with Options

There are several risks and constraints associated with the options considered in the above table. This section addresses the major constraints and risks associated with the options.

4.1 Option 1

This is the status quo option, with regular maintenance to existing facilities.

4.2 Option 2 (lengthen boat ramp)

Option 2 involves lengthening the ramp thereby increasing the tidal window during which users can launch and retrieve boats. The toe of the ramp would be set at Mean Low Water Springs which is approximately 1.0m below mean sea level and 0.8m above Lowest Astronomical Tide (LAT). This would increase the tidal availability to 79%. However this would not provide protection from wind waves.

4.3 Options 3-6 (wave protection structures)

Options 3 to 6 each involve either wave protection structures or rock breakwaters to protect boats from waves when launching or retrieving. The four options vary in cost from \$2.5 to \$3.8 million capital cost and from \$140K to \$340K for annual maintenance. To protect from south-east and north-east winds (full protection), the costs would be higher again.

Wave protection structures, even if on piles, interfere with the longshore drift of sand in a similar manner to rock breakwaters. Rock breakwaters dissipate energy available to move sand while piled structures reflect energy available to move sand to some other direction. The picture below shows a typical wave protection structure combined with a breakwater.



Example of wave protection structure adjacent to a rock breakwater

Breakwaters are typically large sized rock structures that extend from the sea bed up and above the surface level of the water.

These wave protection options are expensive in terms of capital and annual maintenance costs and are not considered appropriate for ramps with usage rates experienced at Forrest Beach.

Wave protection structures interfere with the natural movement of sand along the beach and therefore the site would need regular costly dredging to remove built-up sand. TMR concentrates its scarce dredging funds (from boat registration fees) in the eleven state boat harbours.

4.4 Option 7 Cassady Creek boat ramp

The proposed location of the Cassady Creek ramp is shown in the Appendix. It is in a declared Fish Habitat Area (FHA), as is an existing council-owned ramp further up the Cassady Creek catchment. An indicative footprint for the road, ramp and carpark is shown in the Appendix. The process to build a road to the new site would require revoking part of the FHA. This process involves approvals from other state government agencies, as well as parliamentary approvals and would likely take 12-24 months. There is no guarantee that such a submission would be successful. The table shown in the Appendix details the steps involved to build a ramp in a declared FHA.

The area has many protected mangroves and other marine plants and has significant ecological values for fish habitat and breeding. The FHA revocation process would involve public consultation prior to tabling of a submission in parliament. It is envisaged that there would be significant public interest should any revocation be proposed.

Successful habitat revocation often involves environmental offsets. An option for TMR and council to consider would be the removal of the existing upstream minor ramp in a Cassady Creek tributary and rehabilitation of that foreshore and car-parking area to its natural state. TMR would support such an offset.

5 Hydrographic Survey of Cassady Creek

5.1 Tidal height comparison between Forrest Beach and Cassady Creek

The toe of the Forrest Beach boat ramp according to as-construct plans is currently approximately 1.4 m above Lowest Astronomical Tide (LAT), which is the datum used for any tidal predictions. This level converted to the land based Australian Height Datum (AHD) is approximately -0.4m AHD.

The existing ramp at Cassady Creek according to council as-construct drawings has a toe level of -0.31m AHD.

A new ramp at Cassady Creek would be constructed such that it is accessible for creek use at all states of the tide.

5.2 Summary observations from hydrographic survey

The only real advantage for Cassady Creek over Forrest Beach is that it is sheltered and safe to launch a boat in any weather. But this advantage is limited by the need for reasonable weather to safely cross the sand bar at the mouth to access the open sea. Wave conditions at the creek mouth will not allow access to or from the open sea in severe weather even if it is high water.

On good tides boaties would be able to launch from a new Cassady Creek ramp and use the creek for boating activity without crossing the bar.

Cassady Creek is not an all-tide all-weather proposition for access to the open sea from a boat launching facility. Cassady Creek won't provide a reliable solution for vessels returning from a day offshore. It would depend on the tide being reasonably high in the late afternoon. That is, boaties would need to plan ahead on use of Cassady Creek if accessing the open sea.

From the surveyed depths available, the creek and bar are generally navigable in good weather by smaller trailerable boats from mid-tide and higher. That is, at present there is about 50% usability during the day for smaller trailable boats. The sand bar at the creek mouth is a dynamic natural feature and there can be significant seasonal variation in the bar height and channel location. Storms and cyclones can cause dramatic changes at the bar. This is evidenced by viewing "Google Earth" images for different times in the past.

Cassady Creek, if used with caution and local knowledge, can provide an alternate to Forrest Beach for daytime launch and recovery of smaller trailer boats – for access to the open sea in good weather and with half tide or more.

Use of Cassady Creek by larger trailerable boats is quite limited and needs to be planned – based on higher tides – and consideration of the weather if crossing the bar.

5.3 Further observations from hydrographic survey

The survey shows that there is only 0.9m above LAT on the entrance bar at present. That is it dries on lower low tides, and is generally not navigable until the tide is above half way up.

Mean sea level (roughly half tide) is 1.84m above LAT. This means that at roughly half tide a boatie will have 0.9m depth on the bar at present, and 0.6m or more in the best water inside the creek. The channel inside the creek presents more of a depth constraint than the bar - if depths remain similar to those surveyed.

With their motor down, trailer power boat have variable draughts: about 0.7m for tinnies; about 0.9m for cabin boats; and up to about 1.2m or so for larger boats or those with long-leg outboards. This indicates Cassady Creek being more suitable for smaller rather than larger trailable power boats.

So for most boats, somewhat higher than mid-tide would be needed for navigation of the bar (and creek) in good conditions, with a safety margin of even higher tide needed for moderate conditions. And no safe access across the bar in rough/severe conditions – regardless of tide height.

6 Preferred Options

The preference (Option 1 in the table at \$30K annual maintenance) is to leave the Forrest Beach ramp as is and leave council's existing Cassady Creek tributary ramp in place. This is because, in accordance with the recommendations of a statewide GHD demand study of 2011, TMR and council have recently upgraded the nearby all-weather boat launching facility in the Herbert River at Dungeness. Forrest Beach is approximately 40 minutes driving from Dungeness. This falls within the accepted norm (*GHD 2011*) of one hour driving for Australians to access sheltered boating facilities. The ramp at Dungeness is a much safer place to launch and retrieve boats in all weathers and thus attracted TMR and council investment ahead of Forrest and Taylors Beaches.

Another option although not preferred (Option 7 in the table at approximately \$1 million plus \$45K annual maintenance) would be to install a new ramp at Cassady Creek to supplement the Forrest Beach facility for protected mid to high tide use. This option would require constructing a new road through an environmentally significant area. A new Cassady Creek ramp, if environmentally approved, would be protected from the winds and could promote the creek as a recreation facility for the community. The sand bar at the entrance means that there would not be a significant improvement in tidal availability to Forrest Beach, but protection from waves when the tide allows access (mid to high tides only).

A third option (Option 2 in the table at approximately \$1.5 million plus \$30K annual maintenance) would be to extend the Forrest Beach ramp to provide a greater tidal window, but with no change to weather protection and the exposed nature of the beach.

Owing to current government election commitments, any TMR investment in Cassady Creek or Forrest Beach (having been rated on a statewide equity and investment return to boaties basis) would need to be programmed in the financial years after June 2016 – unless special additional funding was sourced.

7 Standards for Options

To ensure clarity of what is expected from the preferred options the following points are noted in relation to the Cassady Creek and Forest Beach options.

Cassady Creek proposal includes:

- o single lane ramp
- o 10 CTU (car-trailer unit) car park
- o gravel surfacing only on the road and car park
- o supply of water at mains pressure

Forest Beach ramp extension includes:

- o demolishing the existing ramp
- o construction of new ramp and toe planks.
- o ramp not available to public for approximately 16 weeks

Process for Revocation of Part of a Fish Habitat Area (FHA)

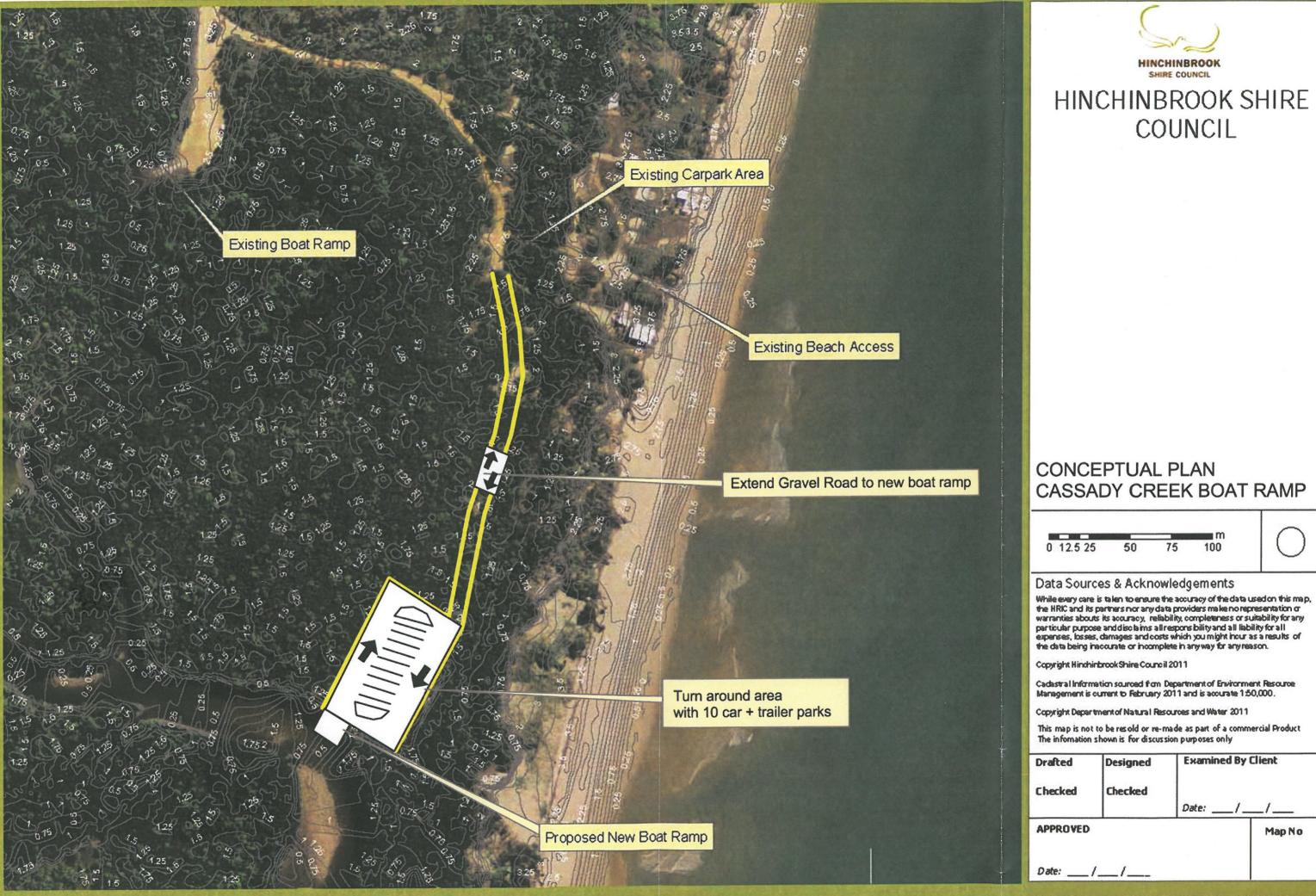
Steps and timeframes:

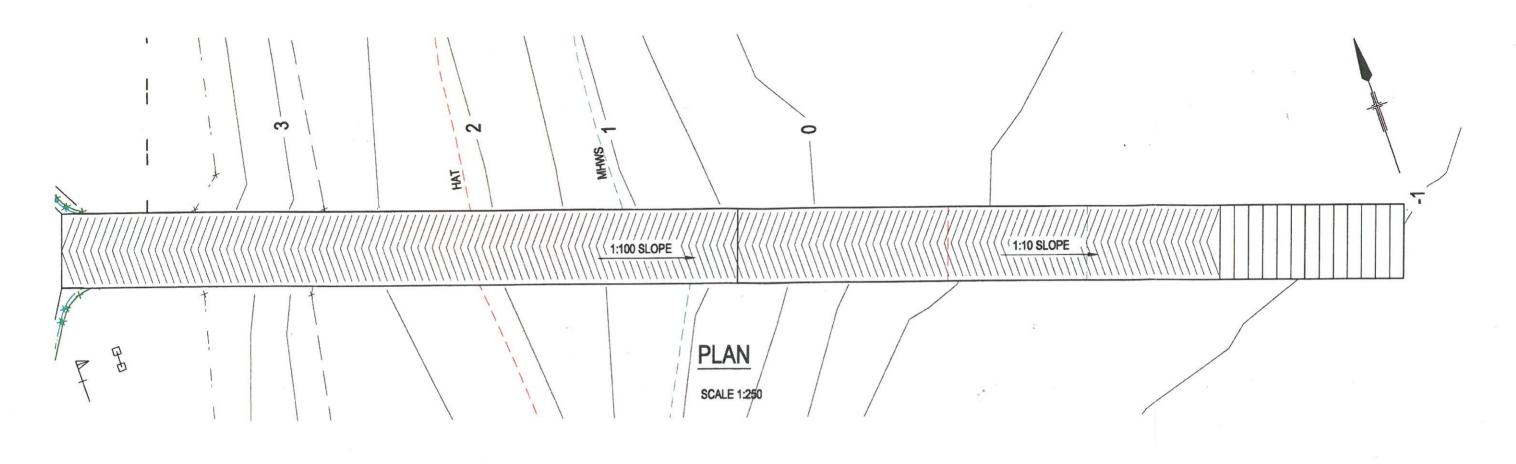
Step Number	Details involved	Timeframes
	Stage 1 – Revocation Support Study	
1	Initial proposal to revoke part of Fish Habitat Area (FHA) submitted to the Department of National Parks, Recreation Sport and Racing (NPRS&R) by Transport and Main Roads (TMR).	
	Time to compile proposal	6 weeks
2	Initial assessment of proposal by NPRS&R and development of Terms of Reference (TOR) for Revocation Support Study (RSS), covering FHA Issues.	Timeframes most likely 2 months.
	Assessment time	8 weeks
3	TMR prepares Revocation Support Study (RSS) to address TOR and submits to NPRS&R. Study must incorporate proposed change and how it will still support the function and values of the Fish Habitat area. Will need detailed design.	
	Ecological study, hydrological study and detailed design.	12 to 24 weeks
4 24 3	RSS assessed by NPRSR. If accepted, Stage 2 is to follow. Assessment by experienced Conservation and Fisheries officers:	8 weeks
Stage 2	 Legislative Process for amendment of Fisheries Regulation part of the FHA 	on 2008 to revoke
5	NPRS&R submits Regulatory Assessment Statement (RAS) exemption proposal to Queensland Treasury.	8 weeks
6	If an RAS exemption is awarded, move direct to step 10	
7	If an RAS is required – The RAS is drafted by NPRS&R and submitted to cabinet for approval. - 28 days community consultation. - 4 weeks preparation time	8 weeks
8	NPRS&R prepares Briefing Note to their Minister for approval of <i>Fisheries Regulation 2008</i> amendment.	1 week
9	Minister will submit proposal to Cabinet for approval if the proposal was subject to an RAS or is considered to be 'significant subordinate legislation'	8 weeks
10	NPRS&R prepares drafting instructions and provides to Office of Queensland Parliamentary Council (OQPC).	6 weeks
11	Draft legislation prepared by OQPC and reviewed by NPRS&R.	Up to 24 weeks

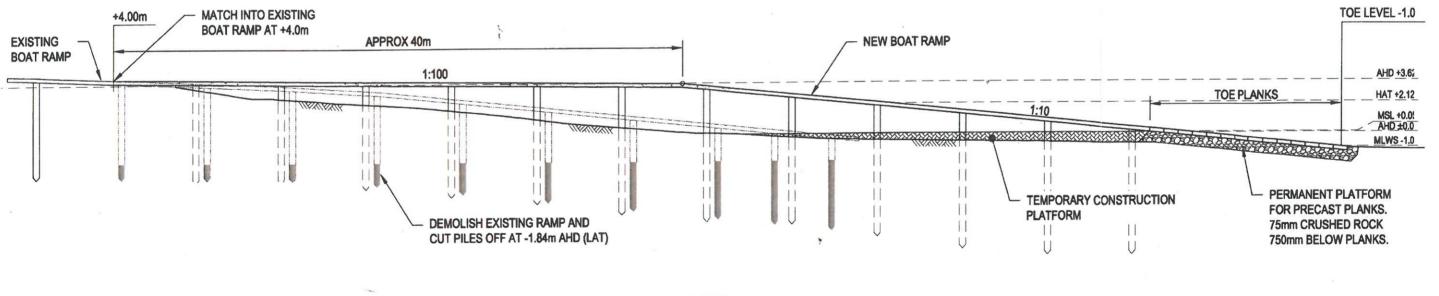
12	Amendment of Fisheries Regulation 2008 approved by Governor-in-Council and notified in the Queensland Government Gazette.	Up to 24 weeks
	Total	125 weeks
		Or 3 years

Note 1: An RAS involves the assessment of regulatory impacts of the proposed revocation (such as economic, social, environmental and compliance) on the community or any individual sector of the community.

Note 2: The RAS must have a minimum of 28 days community consultation included.

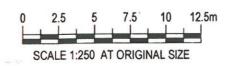






LONG SECTION SCALE 1:250

1. LEVELS ARE IN METRES TO AUSTRALIAN HEIGHT DATUM.





Hinchinbrook Shire Council Forrest Beach Boat Ramp
RAMP PROTECTION CONCEPT

Revision B PROPOSED BOAT RAMP - EXTENSION RAMP DETAILS

Date July 10 Figure 07

Job Number | 41-21629

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