

Port Macquarie Southern Breakwall Upgrade

Community Update

November 2022



Background

The Port Macquarie Southern Breakwall is an iconic and loved treasure for the community. It has multiple community uses and provides many benefits including being a tourist attraction and supporting economic activity and community health. It is also a part of Port Macquarie's identity and history.

This is in addition to its primary purpose as a critical maritime asset that maintains a navigable entrance to the Hastings River for commercial and recreational boating users.

Port Macquarie is the point of origin for freight and supply services between mainland Australia and Lord Howe Island, making the primary purpose of the

breakwall and its long-term structural stability of vital importance to the NSW Government.

Port Macquarie is considered a key investment location in the Maritime Infrastructure Plan 2019-2024. This plan identified the need to ensure the longevity of this critical maritime asset.

In November 2020, the NSW Government announced \$5 million to complete the needed maintenance work.

In June this year, we sought community feedback on the concept design and draft REF for the project.

We have reviewed all feedback received during the display and our responses are provided in the Submission Report, which is now available to view on our website.





Why do we need to maintain the breakwall?

The Port Macquarie Southern Breakwall has served its maritime purpose and the wider community well since 1939.

After 83 years, major maintenance is needed because of its current poor structural condition and its non-compliance with both contemporary breakwall design standards and accessibility guidelines.

Regular assessments are carried out on all breakwalls in NSW especially following major weather events. Since 2013, major maintenance of the Port Macquarie Breakwall has been a priority as its structural integrity was assessed as reaching the end of its useful life.

In 2014, following a weather event, maintenance work was carried out on the breakwall head because we identified its condition was extremely poor and had become a safety hazard. While carrying out this work, we identified that we also needed to carry out repair work on the rest of the breakwall trunk and the training wall.

Funding of this project was approved in late 2020. Not long after this announcement a major flooding event in Port Macquarie occurred in early 2021.

As part of the early development of the project, a number of independent consultants assessed the current condition of the breakwall following the 2021 flooding event.

The assessment showed that sections of the breakwall have been classified as having “failure” status, meaning that the breakwall does not meet current rock structure stability guidelines and needs urgent remediation work.

If repair work is not carried out now, the breakwall will be vulnerable to ongoing progressive damage over time. This, together with potential sudden failure in an extreme weather event, is a considerable safety risk.



Port Macquarie Breakwall head.
Image supplied by Alex McNaugh, Roving Eye.com Photography

We hear you

Thank you to all who provided feedback on the concept design and REF. We received 525 submissions. This high number of submissions, and your feedback, showed us how important the breakwall is to the community, and that it is used and loved by many different groups such as surfers, the fishing community, walkers, runners, locals and tourists.

The main issues raised were:

- the removal of Norfolk Island Pines
- shared user path and its widening
- potential impacts to waves and surfing
- the graffiti and memorial rocks
- potential impacts to fishing off the breakwall.

A summary of our position on these topics is provided in this community update, however we encourage you to view the Submissions Report to read the full responses to issues raised and questions asked.

Scan the QR code to visit the project webpage.



Benefits of the project



Increased life of the breakwall



Improved maritime accessibility and safety for vessel users of the Hastings River



Improved community access and use of the breakwall



Improved pedestrian safety and accessibility



Removal of Norfolk Island Pines



Artists impression of the upgraded path and trees after 10 years growth

Many of the submissions received on this issue described the Norfolk Island Pines as iconic and important to the identity of Port Macquarie. This feedback has been carefully considered, however a decision has been made to continue with the plan to remove the 29 trees as outlined in our concept plan for the following reasons:

- the new work will impact on the tree protection zone areas and ultimately impact their health and longterm survival
- the existing trees have root systems that now extend into the batter and footpath sections of the breakwall structure. The essential maintenance work will require the excavation of this section and in turn will result in damage to tree roots systems. Arborist advice is that the works will impact the health of the trees and their long term survival
- we explored a number of options to retain the trees in early project development including retaining walls, and relocation and reducing the footpath width.

On balance, replacement planting is considered the best option and provides the opportunity to place new trees in a better location to ensure they are enjoyed for many more years to come, while also allowing the shared user path to be widened to five metres.

As a result of feedback, we have increased the number of replacement trees from 29 to 43, made up of 39 Cook Pines and four Norfolk Island Pines. These will be mature trees that are three to four meters high and about three years old.

Around 6,000 additional native groundcover plants will also be planted to soften the look of the area.



Shared user path and its widening

The primary objective of this project is to carry out essential maintenance work to the southern breakwall.

The Port Macquarie Hastings Council's Town Master Plan 2014 and Breakwall Concept Plan 2016 highlighted the need to widen the existing shared path for future growth in the area. As a result, Transport consulted with Council to incorporate the widening of the shared user path into this project.

It was determined, that as the breakwall area would be closed to the community during the rebuild of the breakwall, it presented the best opportunity to widen the shared user path.

Following the recent feedback on the project, we will continue with our plan to increase the footpath to five metres for the following reasons:

- the Port Macquarie Southern Breakwall is the second most popular breakwall walk in NSW
- widening the shared user path will future proof the path for the predicted population growth of the area which will see an increase in the number of users
- Australian shared path guidelines show that a five-metre-wide footpath is recommended for high use recreational paths
- widening the path improves conditions for people with mobility issues, making the path accessible to all users
- the five-metre-wide path is needed for safety reasons, namely to minimise conflict between users such as walkers, runners, cyclist, prams, wheelchairs, dog walkers, fishermen and roller bladders and skaters.



Potential impact on waves and surfing

Transport and the surfing and board riding community share a common objective, to maintain the breakwall structure and ensure its longevity, which will also continue to maintain this beloved, unique and iconic wave for the community to enjoy.

It is not intended to increase the breakwall extent beyond that of the original design intent of the 2014 remediation works. Accordingly, there will be no discernible change to the hydrodynamics (waves, tides, currents) at the



Aerial image pre and post 2014 remediation work

breakwall head relative to that which has existed since the 2014 remediation works were carried out.

This work is part of regular and ongoing maintenance which is critical at the breakwall head which is the section most impacted by storm and wave activity.

Completing regular minor maintenance, as we have proposed for this project, is preferred over waiting for major failures and having to do a major rebuild as was the case in 2014.



Graffiti and memorial rocks

During our early planning of the project, Transport acknowledged the importance of the graffiti artwork and memorial rocks to members of the community.

Although painting or graffiti on Transport infrastructure is not normally encouraged or approved, in this instance we have not imposed restrictions on this practice of the community painting artworks, or placement of memorials on the rocks which has organically grown over many years. However, the breakwall will need to be maintained indefinitely and therefore we cannot guarantee your memorial rocks and artwork will always be there.

We hope that the community understands that anything placed on the rocks of this critical marine infrastructure is not permanent.

While we are planning to reuse the current rock inside the wall, the construction methodology for this major maintenance project, which will involve rebuilding a 600-metre section of the breakwall, will not allow us to keep the current artworks or to replace them in original locations.

Moving the rock will damage the artwork or memorial, we are looking at capturing images of the graffiti artwork through photos and videos.

Using these images, we will create a record and history of this artwork and of the breakwall itself.

We encourage people who would like to share their stories to contact our project team.



Fishing off the breakwall

Transport acknowledges that fishing off the breakwall structure is an important recreational activity.

Most concerns about fishing were because the depiction of the breakwall in the 3D imaging made it look like the end result would be a flat-sloped wall which would restrict fishing.

As a result of feedback, our 3D imaging has been amended to depict the intended breakwall rock type structure. We can confirm that those who enjoy fishing from this location will be able to continue to do so.

There were also concerns that the fishing habitats and food sources will be impacted by replacement of new rock.

As detailed in the REF Aquatic Ecology report, there will be short-term impact on fishing in the area. As the project is reinstalling the breakwall rock structure, it will provide a new fishing habitat and food sources, so there will only be a short-term impact.

Some submissions asked if we would include fishing platforms in the project. While fishing platforms are part of the Port Macquarie Hastings Council concept plan, we have not included platforms in this project due to budget constraints.

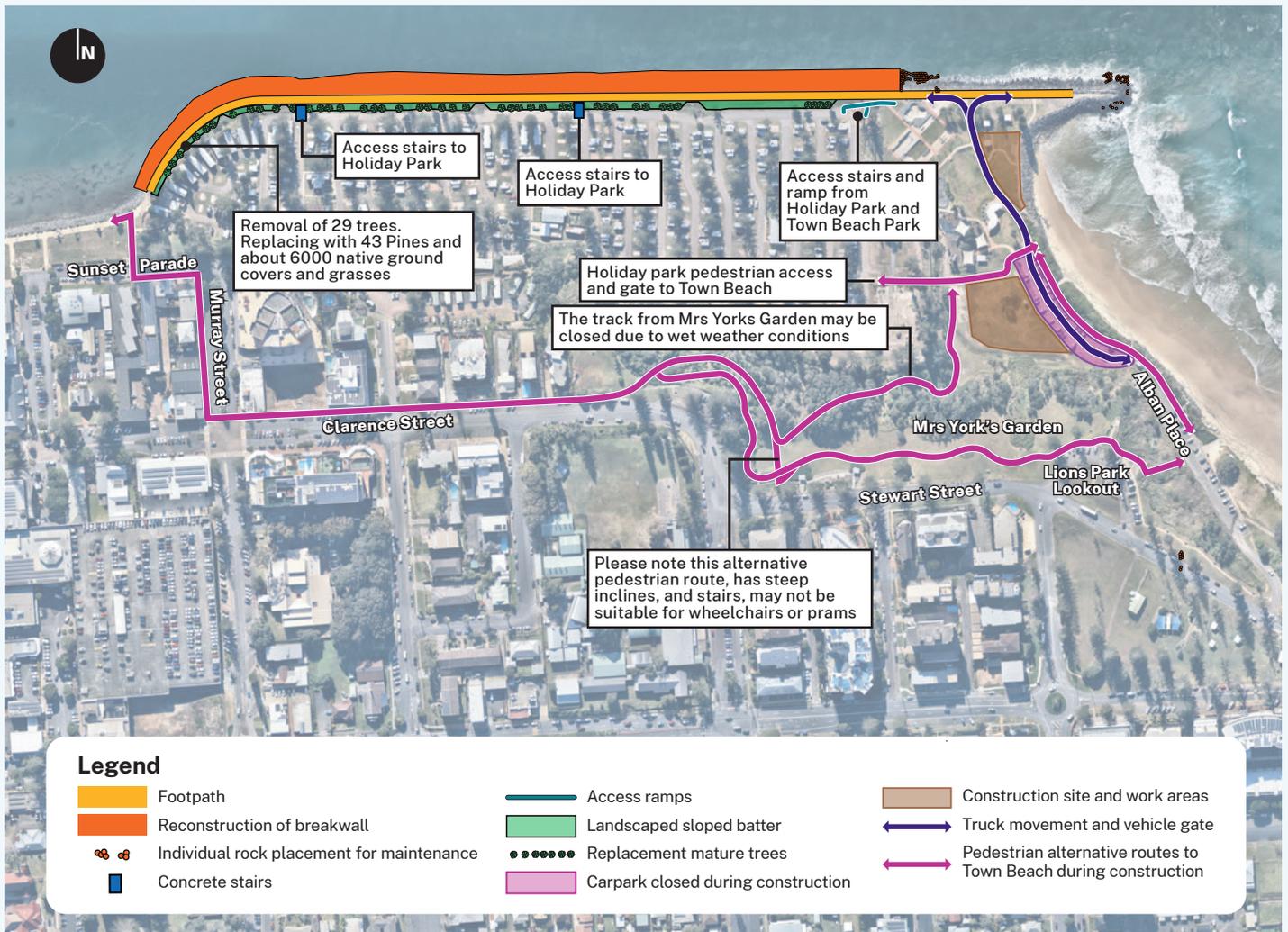


Aerial Image Port Macquarie Breakwall head supplied by Alex McNaugh, Roving Eye.com Photography.

The project

Following feedback received on the concept design and REF, we will complete the following work as part of this critical maintenance project:

- rebuilding 600 metres of the breakwall along the river
- completing maintenance of the breakwall head with no change to the existing footprint
- installing a new five metre wide footpath along the majority of the structure's length. This excludes the last 30 metres at the head of the breakwall, so the current footprint and width will stay the same in that area
- installing a new access ramp at the seaward end of the NRMA Port Macquarie Breakwall Holiday Park (Holiday Park)
- installing new lighting on the shared user path
- installing six seating areas
- landscaping the area
- installing two new stair accesses to the Holiday Park
- installing safety fencing along the southern side of the path
- installing a kerb along the northern side of the path.



What changes have been made

We appreciate all the feedback we have received on the project.

Our aim is to ensure the breakwall continues to provide all the benefits it does now and well into the future. The following changes are the result of the feedback:

- increasing the replacement planting from 29 native trees to 43 Pines and 6,000 native ground covers
- installing informal rock stairs in the breakwall to be used for emergency access to the water edge
- installing shared path safety signage
- using solar bollard lighting rather than overhead lighting for the shared path
- defer the start of works until after the Ironman event being held in early May 2023.

What has happened to date?

- Display draft REF and refined concept design for community feedback
- The Submission report has been finalised
- Stockpiling work at John Frazer Place has started and will continue until December 2022.

What are the next steps?

- Finalise the REF
- Obtain approval to proceed with the project
- Seek tenders for the construction of the project
- Award the contract for the construction of the project so that we can start work mid-2023
- We are aiming to start work in 2023 after the Iron Man event.

We will keep you informed on the progress of the project.



Contact us

If you have any questions or would like more information please contact our project team:



1800 571 311 (business hours)



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nswroads.work/portmacquariebreakwall



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Project progress



Project planning



Develop concept design



Display refined concept design and draft REF for community comment



Finalise REF and detailed design

WE ARE HERE



Project approval



Seek tenders



Start construction



Open to the community



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