OUR BEACHES ARE CLEAN, HEALTHY, SAFE AND ACCESSIBLE NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE.

Image: Snapper Rocks
The City has undertaken a review of the Ocean Beaches Strategy 2013–2023 to ensure we are on track with delivering our vision and are best placed to deal with emerging issues.

1.0 THE CITY’S ICONIC BEACHES

Gold Coast beaches are an internationally recognised icon and are valued by both residents and tourists alike. The Gold Coast’s iconic beaches draw more than 11.5 million day visitors* to the city every year. Our beaches and foreshores provide a range of benefits to our city, including open spaces that provide amenity and a place for active and passive recreation. Our beaches underpin our city lifestyle, supporting Gold Coast tourism and iconic city events. Our beaches support a significant component of the regional economy.

To ensure our valuable ocean beaches are given the care and protection they require, a special plan called the Ocean Beaches Strategy 2013–2023 (OBS) was developed in consultation with the community.

The four strategic outcomes of the OBS are:

1. Everyone can enjoy a beach experience
2. Our beaches are healthy and clean
3. Our infrastructure is protected from coastal hazards
4. There is joint stewardship of the ocean beaches

We are continually monitoring our progress towards the delivery of these outcomes and listening to feedback from the Gold Coast community.

*Provided by Tourism Research Australia
The City experienced a succession of intense storms between 2009 and 2013. Our coastline was vulnerable to storm damage and beach users were not able to effectively enjoy the coastline. The challenges faced during this time impacted the city’s image and the regional economy. An integrated and prioritised framework of response was initiated through the Ocean Beaches Strategy.

Since the OBS was adopted by Council, there has been significant investment in protecting and managing our coastline. A number of signature projects and important policy improvements have been delivered. These are further described in Section 3.0.
Above: Sand nourishment at Surfers Paradise, 2017

Above left and right: Extensive erosion at Kirra Beach after a large swell event, 2017
EVERYONE CAN ENJOY A BEACH EXPERIENCE

With a growing, ageing and increasingly diverse population and finite amount of ocean beaches, it is important to manage our ocean beach environment so that everyone can enjoy a beach experience.

For the community this means:

- people of all abilities and backgrounds can enjoy a beach experience
- there are diverse options for getting to or along the beach
- it is safe to swim at the beach
- a safe beach environment
- residents and visitors can enjoy a beach experience
- a coordinated approach to managing commercial activity on our beaches and in our parks.

Achievements to date:

9 LOCATIONS PROVIDED FOR BEACH WHEELCHAIR INFRASTRUCTURE

This includes wheelchair-friendly matting which has been provided at nine locations across the Gold Coast.

5 km OF OCEANWAY

Coastal cycle and pedestrian pathways have been constructed along our foreshores.

37 PERMANENT + 140 SEASONAL LIFEGUARD STAFF

Patrolling 26 beaches year-round and 32 beaches during the school holidays.
Our beaches are healthy and clean

The value of the natural beach environment is often underestimated and provides significant social and economic benefits in addition to beach ecological values. The Gold Coast is lucky to have naturally beautiful, sandy beaches. The beach amenity is recognised nationally and internationally, attracting more than 11.5 million day visitors annually*.

Maintaining healthy and clean beaches is important to visitors and is core to why residents choose to live here.

For the community this means:

- there is a balance of sand for walking, playing and relaxing
- there are sand dunes with native vegetation, reducing the risk of sand loss and providing animal habitat
- sand dunes are protected from becoming overgrown with weeds and negative human impacts, such as pedestrian traffic
- the water is of a high quality to support marine life and swimming safety
- the beaches are free of litter
- there are long stretches of unadorned sandy beach
- national and international tourists are attracted to our world-class beaches.

Achievements to date:

- 3,026,758 cubic metres of sand was delivered to Palm Beach and from Miami to Main Beach as part of the Gold Coast Beach Nourishment Project in 2017.
- 15 tonnes of rubbish is removed off our beaches each year.
- The Gold Coast Environmental Volunteer Awards in November 2019 was established for volunteers who clean our beaches.
OUR INFRASTRUCTURE IS PROTECTED FROM COASTAL HAZARDS

Climate variability, frequent and intense storms, and sea level rise are resulting in increased risk of erosion events and damage to coastal infrastructure. A holistic approach to coastal management is essential in order to protect infrastructure and manage erosion.

Active management of the coastline has been occurring and will continue to occur. Natural ecological and physical processes will be embraced to assist with protecting infrastructure from the ocean.

For the community this means:

- the beaches and dunes are managed to protect public property
- private property owners understand their responsibilities in protecting their properties
- the volume of sand on the beach provides a buffer from erosion and storm events
- new development will be set back to allow for natural coastal processes.
+ 3 MILLION cubic metres of sand delivered to Palm Beach and from Miami to Main Beach.

+7000 tonnes of specialist rock used to extend the Kirra Point groyne to 180 metres.

1 ARTIFICIAL REEF at Narrowneck renewed and Palm Beach Artificial Reef under construction to protect vulnerable sections of our coastline.

9000 M of public seawalls have been either constructed or certified since 2013.

2 PARTNERSHIPS with NSW and QLD State Governments to deliver sand to Gold Coast beaches.

60,000 M³ of sand removed each year during the annual dredge of Currumbin and Tallebudgera Creeks, which has nourished Burleigh Heads and Palm Beach.
THERE IS JOINT STEWARDSHIP OF THE OCEAN BEACHES

Gold Coast ocean beaches are enjoyed by, and provide benefits to many people; individuals, businesses and governments benefit either directly or indirectly from the sandy beaches. It is important we work together to ensure that the effort required to maintain the benefits is equitably distributed.

For the community this means:

- everyone understands the benefits of having clean, healthy, safe and accessible beaches
- there is equitable investment in beach management from different levels of government and those who benefit from having clean, healthy, safe and accessible beaches
- research and community engagement activities inform balanced decision-making
- stakeholders are informed and actively participate in actions to manage ocean beaches.

Achievements to date

GOLD COAST SURF MANAGEMENT PLAN

Our Surf Management Plan was endorsed by City in 2015 and recognises the value surfing provides to our lifestyle and economy.

WORLD SURFING RESERVE

- Burleigh Heads to Snapper Rocks was identified as a World Surfing Reserve.
- Formation of the World Surfing Reserve Local Stewardship.

PARTNERSHIPS

- Griffith University Centre for Coastal Management.
- Queensland Government
  - The Gold Coast Seaway Sand Bypass
  - Surfers Paradise Sand Backpass
  - Tweed River Entrance Sand Bypassing Project.
- Various volunteer partnerships.
FROM JUNE TO SEPTEMBER 2017, OUR CITY DELIVERED OVER THREE MILLION CUBIC METRES OF SAND TO VULNERABLE SECTIONS OF THE COASTLINE.

The City delivered a major beach nourishment project from June to September 2017, delivering over three million cubic metres of sand to vulnerable sections of our coastline to buffer against coastal erosion. The sand was placed within the surf zone where nature would move it through wave action.

The City’s $13.9 million investment was particularly important in the lead-up to the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games (GC2018). The additional sand ensured our coastline had an effective storm buffer and provided extra capacity to host key events throughout the GC2018 period. As a result, our beaches were in great condition for this major international event.

Since the sand dredging concluded in September 2017, the City has been monitoring how nature has moved the sand through our ongoing hydrographic survey program and coastal aerial photography. This data has shown the additional sand has moved both onshore and into the sand bar systems, increasing the overall beach sand volumes, and is continuing to work to protect our beautiful beaches.

The City will continue to monitor the movement of the additional sand from the Gold Coast Beach Nourishment Project and how it is helping to ensure everyone can enjoy a beach experience into the future.
In 2019, the City is constructing the Palm Beach Artificial Reef to enhance coastal protection of Palm Beach, one of the Gold Coast’s most vulnerable beaches to coastal erosion.

The artificial reef will be located approximately 270 metres offshore from Nineteenth Avenue between the beach and the existing natural reef, and will be approximately 160 metres long and 80 metres wide. It will be constructed of large rock boulders and will be 1.5 metres below the average water level at its highest point.

Phase 1 of the Palm Beach Shoreline Project was completed in September 2017 and saw the successful nourishment of Palm Beach with more than 470,000 cubic metres of clean sand. Construction of the artificial reef is Phase 2 of the Palm Beach Shoreline Project.

Significant investigation and design effort has gone into designing the artificial reef, including coastal data analysis, computer modelling and wave tank testing. The reef will work by influencing the surrounding waves and currents to help prolong the benefit provided by the sand delivered through Phase 1, and promote a long-term increase in sand along vulnerable sections of Palm Beach.

The increase in sand will generally be located just offshore within the surf zone, not always distinctly visible to beach users, but in a position to act as a protective buffer from erosion in the future.

While the primary purpose of the artificial reef is coastal protection, surfing outcomes have been considered during the design of the reef, in line with the City’s Surf Management Plan. Under certain swell conditions there is predicted to be waves breaking on the reef suitable for intermediate and advanced surfers.
SURF MANAGEMENT PLAN

The development of the Gold Coast Surf Management Plan in 2015 represents the first time anywhere in the world that a local government has formally recognised the importance of surf breaks to the local community. We understand the critical nature of managing surf amenity with solid science, community input and effective management strategies.

The Surf Management Plan was an action of the Ocean Beaches Strategy. Through its development, and the process of defining surf amenity factors at specific Gold Coast beaches, the science informing the Surf Management Plan has provided further benefits for other signature projects such as the Narrowneck Reef Renewal and the Palm Beach Shoreline Project.

Above: Currumbin Alley
The Narrowneck artificial reef was built to protect the vulnerable, exposed and narrow stretch of foreshore at Narrowneck beach. This stretch of coastline has a history of vulnerability to storm erosion.

Since the reef was constructed in 1999, coastal monitoring shows that it has been an effective protection mechanism that has increased the resilience of Main Beach at Narrowneck against the impacts of storm events and large ocean swell. The reef lessens the erosion impact of large waves; as these waves cross the reef, their intensity becomes less threatening to the beach. The reef also promotes a build-up of sand near the structure, which acts as a buffer to protect the beach during storms.

Renewal of the Narrowneck Reef was completed in 2018 by placing 84 additional geotextile sand containers on the existing reef structure. Replacing geotextile containers has restored this asset, and will result in increased sand volumes for beaches between Main Beach and Surfers Paradise.
5.0 OBS MID-LIFE REVIEW FINDINGS

The mid-life review of the Ocean Beaches Strategy has shown we have made significant improvements in the condition of our beaches since adoption in 2013.

The signature projects described earlier in this document have allowed the City to progress addressing the issues identified when the Ocean Beaches Strategy was developed.

• Our beaches now have a sufficient volume of sand to improve their resilience to storm damage.

• 80 per cent of the seawall has been built and certified to required standards in areas of public open space along the foreshore.

• Community sentiment in relation to the services provided at our beaches has been consistently positive.

However, the mid-life review has found emerging issues that need to be managed:

1 OUR BEACHES ARE EXPOSED TO A HIGHLY VARIABLE AND CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

This will mean greater variability in storm conditions in the future. We will continue to manage our beaches to ensure ‘our infrastructure is protected from coastal hazards’ and ‘everyone can enjoy a beach experience’.

2 OUR POPULATION IS PREDICTED TO INCREASE AND CHANGE OVER THE COMING DECADES

The way our community and our visitors access and enjoy the coastline is changing. We have identified that the services provided by our beaches will also need to adapt to respond to increasing and changing demands, to ensure that everyone can continue to enjoy their beach experience.

3 INCREASED FOCUS ON INTERDEPENDENCIES AND OUTCOME INTEGRATION

Whilst a number of existing partnerships exist across the city and with external organisations, there is further opportunity to align and integrate programs and projects to improve outcomes for the community.

In light of these changing factors, the City will explore opportunities for broader government and community engagement to deliver benefits for our city’s coastline. Through enhanced policy and project initiatives, our beaches will continue to remain clean, healthy, safe and accessible now and into the future.
A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

Stakeholder engagement feedback has identified some new key actions in response to the emerging issues to be included as part of the Strategy mid-life review. They are highlighted in bold in the below listing of key actions.

Defining the levels of service for Gold Coast beaches as Key Action 1.5 will enable the City to target investment into infrastructure and management activities which better reflect on the community’s needs and use in response to changing demographics of the Gold Coast community.

Delivering on Key Actions 4.5 and 4.6 will provide the City with data related to our coastal environment. This data will be used to identify trends and feed into evidence-based decision making across all levels of government and the private sector, providing positive outcomes for our community.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGIC OUTCOMES</th>
<th>KEY ACTIONS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everyone can enjoy a beach experience</td>
<td>1.1 Deliver infrastructure that supports beach access and use</td>
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<td>1.2 Develop a consistent approach to managing commercial activities on beaches</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.3 Develop a surf management plan that recognises and supports Gold Coast’s surf amenity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.4 Deliver the coastal pedestrian and cycle network</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.5 Not all beaches are the same – define levels of service for Gold Coast beaches</td>
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<tr>
<td>Our beaches are healthy and clean</td>
<td>2.1 Monitor and improve beach health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2 Maintain clean beaches</td>
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<tr>
<td>Our infrastructure is protected from coastal hazards</td>
<td>3.1 Undertake planning related to coastal protection initiatives</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.2 Implement recommendations from the Shoreline Management Plan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3.3 Ensure the City Plan 2015 (Planning Scheme) supports Ocean Beaches Strategy outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td>There is joint stewardship of the ocean beaches</td>
<td>4.1 Develop collaborations and partnerships that support ocean beach management</td>
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<td>4.2 Undertake and promote research about the ocean beaches</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4.3 Actively engage local stakeholders in ocean beaches</td>
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<td>4.4 Report on Ocean Beaches Strategy outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.5 Actively engage with government partners to seek regional policy and investment opportunities for Gold Coast beaches</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4.6 Develop collaborations and partnerships to explore new technology, integration of data collection and analysis</td>
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6.0 THE WAY FORWARD

The City remains committed to delivering the Ocean Beaches Strategy and the 16 revised Key Actions.

Working with the community, Australian and Queensland Governments, and our partners in the private sector, we will invest in our iconic beaches which support our city lifestyle and regional economy. We will continue to work with our community to shape the future of our beaches and ensure they are maintained to world-class standards.

We set out not to predict the future, but to prepare for it by anticipating likely scenarios and planning for change. Our city’s beaches are too important an asset to leave to chance.

Image: Gold Coast Sand Pumping Jetty at The Spit, Main Beach
FOR MORE INFORMATION

P  1300 GOLDCOAST (1300 465 326)
W  cityofgoldcoast.com.au/beaches