

Frequently Asked Questions

Waterfront living – revetment walls

Q1. What is a waterfront revetment wall?

A waterfront revetment wall retains and protects land from erosion.

Q2. Who is responsible for the condition of the revetment wall fronting a private property?

Private property owners are legally responsible for managing revetment walls on their property or which benefit their property. City of Gold Coast only constructs and maintains revetment walls that protect urban areas enjoyed by the public (e.g. parks and roads).

Q3. Why doesn't the Council fix the revetment walls?

Council considered the matter of responsibility for revetment walls following presentation of expert legal advice and confirmed that responsibility for revetment walls rests with the adjoining waterfront property owner. The reference for this decision can be found at goldcoast.qld.gov.au/documents/bf/revetment-wallreport.pdf.

Q4. How should waterfront property owners determine the condition of their revetment wall?

The City recommends that waterfront property owners seek professional engineering advice on the structural adequacy of the revetment wall and whether any maintenance or structural works will be required to maintain it.

Q5. How often should I inspect my revetment wall to determine the condition of it?

Due to the dynamic environment where revetment walls are located, it is important to inspect the condition of your revetment wall regularly. It is most important to inspect your wall after king tides, revetment wall overtopping, major wave action and storm events.

Q6. What will happen if I do not fix up my revetment wall when required?

Revetment walls can collapse if they are not adequately maintained. Collapsing walls are most common during rainfall and flood events. Depending on the size and location of the wall, the consequences of falling revetment walls can be severe, undermining houses, injuring people and polluting the environment. If your collapsed wall affects adjoining properties you may be responsible for any damage arising from the failure of your wall.

The cost to recover from a collapsed revetment wall is many times greater than the cost of proper ongoing care and maintenance of the wall. The State Emergency Service (SES) volunteers endeavour to provide assistance to householders who suffer storm damage (phone 132 500 for assistance). The SES encourages householders to take their responsibilities seriously and fix their walls prior to the storm season so that SES volunteers do not have to put their lives at risk. Prevention is better than disaster recovery.

The City can use Local Law No. 17 to require a responsible person to maintain a revetment wall. Further information regarding Local Law No. 17 can be found at goldcoast.qld.gov.au/local-law-no-17-maintenance-of-works-in-waterway-areas-2013-further-information-16993.html.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q7. How should potential purchasers of waterfront property determine the condition of a waterfront revetment wall?

It is important to determine the condition of the revetment wall prior to considering the purchase of a waterfront property. A professional engineer can give advice on the structural adequacy of the revetment wall and whether any structural works will be required.

Under Local Law 17, a seller of waterfront property may have an obligation to include a clause in the contract for sale stating that specific structures must be maintained by the property owner. If this clause is not included in the contract, the purchaser has the option to terminate the contract at any time prior to settlement. A contract disclosure decision tree can be found at goldcoast.qld.gov.au/documents/bf/contract-disclosure-obligation-LL17.pdf.

Q8. How much does it cost to build or maintain a revetment wall?

A professional engineer can assist to estimate how much money is required to reconstruct a revetment wall. Typical costs to reconstruct revetment walls along Gold Coast waterways varies from \$1,600 upwards per metre of wall depending on the shape, age, usage and conditions of the waterway.

Q9. How do I find a professional engineer to advise me on the condition of my revetment wall?

Consulting engineers with coastal structural experience can be found in the yellow pages at yellowpages.com.au or by contacting Consult Australia on (07) 3733 0785.

Q10. Does building or maintaining a revetment wall require an approval?

Generally the construction of a waterfront revetment wall will require a development approval under the state legislation and/or the local government planning scheme. Maintenance of approved revetment walls generally does not require additional approvals. If the works involve reconstruction of the wall, or modifying its shape, position or materials then it's likely that a new approval will be required. Replacement or rebuilding an entire wall is not considered maintenance work. If you require any advice in regards to your works please contact City of Gold Coast's Operational Works Section on 5585 8298 or 5582 8883. The Operational Works Section can advise you how to put in an application form for the works on your revetment wall.

Q11. Where can I obtain an application form for works on my revetment wall?

Please call 5582 8708 for advice.

Q12. How can I find out if my revetment wall has already been approved?

Please call 5582 8708 for advice.

Q13. What happens if the search is unsuccessful in obtaining information regarding my revetment wall?

Many revetment walls were constructed by developers as part of larger housing estates. The information regarding these revetment walls may not be located within the City records for an individual property. Waterfront property owners are encouraged to register information about their revetment walls with the City. Where there is no information regarding the revetment wall, the best approach is to obtain professional engineering advice to determine the condition of your revetment wall and whether any works will be required to ensure the wall is structurally sound.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q14. I have information relating to the revetment wall protecting my private property, what should I do with it?

If you hold information relating to the revetment wall protecting your private property, please submit this information to the City. This will ensure all records held are kept up to date. Please send this information to: PO Box 5042, Gold Coast Mail Centre, QLD 9729.

Q15. I intend on building or developing my waterfront property. Where can I find information about what will be required for the revetment wall?

The Gold Coast Planning Scheme requires that development on waterfront property does not proceed unless the water frontage is stable and capable of supporting the proposed development. The City's Land Development Guidelines and Codes outline the requirements for planning new revetment walls, or new development supported by existing revetment walls. A condition of development or building on waterfront property may be to provide to the City certification from a Registered Professional Engineer Queensland that the condition of the revetment wall is suitable for the development or building proposed. It is not desirable that new buildings are constructed on waterfront property if the foundations (including the revetment wall) are inadequate to prevent the collapse of the structure.

Q16. How do I know where my revetment wall should be built?

The City has maps showing acceptable locations for waterfront buildings, revetment walls and pontoons. The acceptable locations are called waterfront setback (for waterfront buildings), waterway regulation line (for revetment walls) and quay line (for pontoons and jetties). Please call 5582 8708 for advice. If there is no waterfront setback, revetment regulation line or quay line information available for your property, then an impact assessment process is required to establish these alignments prior to development or building upon that property.

Q17. What if I want to build my revetment wall in a different location to that shown on the City map?

Applicants can submit an impact assessment that justifies new locations for revetment walls for consideration for adoption by the City and other regulatory agencies.

Q18. If my revetment wall becomes unstable, what can I do?

In an emergency situation where public health and safety may be threatened you may wish to carry out rock buttressing works to your revetment wall as a maintenance measure. Rock buttressing (rock armour) is the placement of rock against the revetment wall to provide additional stability. An application to place rock will need to be lodged with the City. Works can be carried out before this application is lodged however the City's eventual approval, via a development application process for temporary works, is required. For this reason residents are urged to contact the City to obtain information on how to perform these emergency works which the City will need to eventually approve.

There are certain statutory requirements which must be met for emergency coastal works (such as the preparation of a safety management plan and where practical, advice from a Registered Professional Engineer Queensland – RPEQ). Advice can be sought from the City on 5585 8298 or 5582 8883.

These works may provide a temporary measure to stabilise the wall but it is advised that you contact a consulting engineer with relevant structural experience to determine whether the wall will need reconstruction. Further information may be obtained from the Department of Environment and Science at https://environment.des.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0031/88906/cpm-gl-emergency-tidal-works.pdf.

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Q19. How can I work out if any state planning matters relate to works on my revetment wall?

Visit the Queensland Government's website at <https://www.qld.gov.au/environment/coasts-waterways> or call the Department of Environment and Science on **13 QGOV** (13 74 68).

Q20. Will my household insurance cover my revetment wall?

All household insurance policies differ in the level of coverage they provide. Please call your household insurance company and ensure they provide the appropriate cover to include any issues which could arise in regard to your revetment wall.