



COOCHIN CREEK DEVELOPMENTS

Why environmental assessment under federal law is needed

1. What has been proposed

Two large-scale developments have been approved at Coochin Creek following the Queensland Planning Minister, Jarrod Bleijie's use of Ministerial call-in powers. This allowed the Comiskey Group's Big4+ Tourist Park and the mega Music Festival and Outdoor Exhibition Centre developments to be decided by the Minister outside the standard and appropriate local government assessment process.

The Minister approved these intensive developments despite the Sunshine Coast Council raising significant concerns which were shared by relevant State agencies to the point of recommending refusals. These concerns were amplified by overwhelming community opposition.

While the developments have received Queensland planning approval, they have not been assessed under Australia's national environment laws, the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). As a result, there has been no Commonwealth assessment of their potential impacts on Matters of National Environmental Significance, including the internationally recognised Moreton Bay (Pumicestone Passage) Ramsar Wetland, nor any assessment of the cumulative impacts of the developments when considered together.

This is why a Commonwealth assessment remains critical. It is the only process capable of independently evaluating whether the combined impacts of these developments could significantly affect nationally protected environmental values and whether additional safeguards, modifications or refusal are required under federal law.

The developments:

Tourist Park

- **Big4+ style Tourist Park: 75 cabins + 75 camp/caravan sites.**
- Swimming pools, jumping castles, water park with water buckets, 1,000 square metre building with reception, bars and dining, cabanas and pools with tiles and concrete right next to the mangroves and riparian areas on the Pumicestone Passage.
- Accommodating up to **600 guests** (this cap has since been removed).
- **Noise, light and vehicle pollution 24 hours a day.**
- **Adjacent to the Moreton Bay Marine Park and Pumicestone Passage Marine Conservation Zone and the Bribie Island National Park.**
- **One way in and out via Roys Rd (East):** narrow, rural road, no lighting, in a **high intensity bushfire zone**. Roys Road (East) also **floods** in sections.
- **Sewerage treatment system:** 2.43 hectares (**64,400 litres of effluent per day**) risk to hydrological security of land and dams that drain into Pumicestone Passage wildlife habitats.

At the developer's request, several conditions were significantly weakened or removed only months after the Minister's approval. The original set of conditions were publicly described as providing 'strong safeguards for the environment and visitor safety' and the result of 'a comprehensive assessment'. This

occurred despite objections from the Sunshine Coast Council as the 'Affected Entity' and widespread community concerns, and without any updated environmental or operational assessments – details that were already lacking. Only a small number of the requested changes were refused.

Key concerns about removed or weakened conditions include:

- removal of the cap on the number of people accommodated on site (previously limited to 600 persons based on 75 cabins and 75 campsites)
- amendments affecting core operational elements, including water supply, bushfire and flood risk management, traffic, and amplified music controls
- increased noise, light, litter and disturbance impacts on wildlife, including threatened species.
- expanded scope of site use, access and operational intensity
- reduction of ecological buffers
- encroachment into ecologically sensitive riparian areas, mangroves and wetland systems which would degrade these values, to privatise access to Pumicestone Passage—this is the Roys Road esplanade public reserve, not the developer's land
- approval of unrestricted personal helicopter use by the developer, despite the original condition reasonably limiting helicopter activity to emergency use only.

Music Festival and Outdoor Exhibition Centre

- Indicative festival site area: 12 hectares/29.6 acres (total area 146ha) with entry straight across from homes of long term residents.
- Music festival capacity **35,000** including **20,000** campers per day/night over multiple days and events.
- Parking: **6,580** vehicles plus **100** buses.
- **6 events/music festivals** per year.
- Music Festivals **4 days + 2 days** campers arrive/leave + set up and pull down.
- Total = **5 weeks** per event/festival x 6 per year = **30 weeks of disruption and pollution.**
- **One** narrow, rural, **no through road in and out** subject to **flood and fire risk.**
- **10 kms** from Bruce Highway with “**unacceptable delays**” expected (State Assessment Referral Agency assessment and noting road infrastructure already at or exceeding capacity)
- Adjoining National Park which supports **greater glider, koala and other threatened species habitat.**
- Surrounded by a designated **high intensity bushfire zone.**

These are not **minor** or **temporary** uses. They represent a **permanent intensification of land use** in a sensitive coastal catchment intended to be protected in perpetuity from incompatible development such as this.

2. Where this is happening matters

The projects sit within the **Coochin Creek catchment**, which flows directly into:

- **Pumicestone Passage**
- **Moreton Bay Ramsar Wetland.**

This wetland is protected under international law because of its ecological importance.

Key points:

- Water, sediment and pollutants from the site flow **directly into the Ramsar system.**
- The Passage is **shallow, fragile and highly dependent on clean catchment inputs.**
- Once degraded, it is very difficult for these systems to recover, if at all.

This is not a distant or indirect relationship. It is a **direct hydrological and ecological connection**.

3. Why these are not ‘eco-tourism’ or ‘just a festival site’

The developer and state government narrative has focused on:

- an ‘eco-tourism opportunity’
- a ‘festival venue’
- a previously modified rural site.

That framing obscures the scale of what is actually being established and operated. These are not eco-tourism or a temporary festival venue—they are permanent, high-intensity uses within a fragile coastal system.

The scale, intensity and persistence of activity

Across both projects:

- thousands of people repeatedly entering the sites over prolonged periods
- permanent buildings and infrastructure
- on-site wastewater treatment
- lighting, noise and traffic over extended periods
- increased boating and recreational pressure.

This creates a **fundamentally different disturbance regime** from existing and intended land uses.

It is not comparable to current low-impact rural activity.

4. The real risks

The concern is not a single impact. It is the **combination of multiple pressures acting together over time**.

Water quality

- More nutrients, sediments and contaminants entering the creek.
- Increased risk of algal growth and seagrass loss.
- Ongoing wastewater generation without full operational clarity.

Even small increases in loading can shift ecological balance in fragile and sensitive systems like Pumicestone Passage.

Hydrological change

- Altered drainage and flood behaviour.
- Reduced natural filtration by wetlands.
- Disturbance of acid sulfate soils (which can release acid and metals).

These are recognised pathways to **long-term water quality decline**.

Habitat and wildlife

- Loss and fragmentation of habitat.
- Increased road traffic and wildlife mortality.
- Degradation of ecological corridors.

These impacts don’t stop at the fence line—they spread into surrounding areas.

Noise, lighting and disturbance

- Large events, repeated over time
- continuous background disturbance from accommodation
- light and noise extending into surrounding habitats

Migratory birds and other species are **highly sensitive to repeated disturbance**, not just habitat loss.

Individually these pressures matter. Combined, they change how the system functions.

5. Why cumulative impact matters

At the state level, each development has been considered separately.

But in reality:

- they are **next to each other**
- they operate over the **same timeframe**
- they affect the **same waterways, habitats and ecological systems**.

This means their impacts do not occur in isolation.

Together they would bring:

- more people
- more traffic, noise and lighting
- more disturbance
- more pressure on the same waterways, habitats and wildlife.

The EPBC Act is designed to consider these kinds of cumulative impacts where Matters of National Environmental Significance may be affected.

Despite the scale of these proposals and their close proximity to one another, no Commonwealth assessment of their combined impacts has occurred. This is particularly concerning given the environmental sensitivity of the Coochin Creek catchment and its direct connection to the Moreton Bay Ramsar Wetland.

6. What hasn't happened (the key issue)

Despite these risks:

- no referral has been made under the **Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act**
- no Commonwealth assessment of impacts on the **Ramsar wetland** under the Act has taken place
- no review of **cumulative impacts** has occurred.

The reason for this gap is simple: the projects have not been referred under the EPBC Act by the developer.

As a result, the Commonwealth assessment process has not been triggered, despite the potential for significant impacts on nationally protected environmental values.

Both projects were approved through Planning Minister Bleijie's **state call-in processes**, despite no comprehensive environmental assessment being conducted, and expert advice from Minister Bleijie's own referral agency recommending refusal.

This has created a clear **gap in environmental oversight**.

7. Why this matters nationally, not just locally

The Moreton Bay Ramsar Wetland is:

- internationally recognised
- protected under Australian law
- critical for migratory species
- part of Australia's global environmental obligations.

Damage to this system is not just a local issue. It is a **national responsibility**.

8. The legal threshold is low – deliberately

Under Commonwealth law, a project must be referred if it “**may have a significant impact**”

This does **not** require proof of harm.

It requires a **real possibility of impact**.

Given:

- direct connection to a Ramsar wetland
- multiple recognised impact pathways
- cumulative pressures
- scientific uncertainty

this threshold is clearly met.

9. What is being asked for

- That the projects be **referred for assessment** under the EPBC Act.
- That impacts on nationally significant environmental values be **independently assessed**.
- That cumulative effects be properly considered.

10. The bottom line

These are not low-impact tourism proposals.

They represent:

- a **large-scale, long-term and permanent intensification of use**
- in a **Ramsar-connected catchment**
- with **multiple, interacting environmental risks**.

The question is not whether impacts are guaranteed.

The question is whether there is a **credible risk**.

There clearly is.

Under Commonwealth environmental law, that alone is enough to require proper assessment before development works commence and irreversible damage occurs.

Take Action!

Please support this urgent request:

- sign the [petition](#)
- write a short email to the Federal Environment Minister, Senator the Hon Murray Watt, **Minister for the Environment and Water** at Minister.watt@dcceew.gov.au calling on him to act now.