BRISBANE’S RIVER ACCESS NETWORK
Unlocking river-based tourism and recreation
Brisbane is a great place to live, work and relax – it’s a safe, vibrant, green and prosperous city, valued for its friendly and optimistic character and enjoyable lifestyle. One key reason for this is the Brisbane River – Brisbane’s greatest natural asset. The river defines our city’s outdoor lifestyle and identity as the river city.

Over time, Brisbane City Council has established a world-class ferry and riverside path network that has been continually improved. There is now an opportunity to further encourage recreational and tourism activities on the river to create new lifestyle and leisure opportunities.

Council developed the River’s Edge Strategy in 2013 to guide the future use of the city reaches of the river. The River Access Network builds on the River’s Edge Strategy and is an implementation plan for a world-class network of river access infrastructure.

It will open up unprecedented opportunities for residents and tourists to enjoy the Brisbane River, and unlock access to Moreton Bay and the islands on our doorstep.

The expansion of tour boat opportunities, the facilitation of a new water taxi industry, and a new network of places for recreational craft at key city destinations represent an exciting future direction for our river.

While we facilitate new developments, our quintessential Brisbane River experiences will remain. Visitors and residents will continue to enjoy our iconic river views and natural beauty as they travel the ferry network, kayak along the river or use the cycling and walking paths.

I look forward to seeing the River Access Network plan unlock the tremendous recreational and tourism opportunities that the Brisbane River offers all residents and visitors.

Graham Quirk
Lord Mayor
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PURPOSE OF THE RIVER ACCESS NETWORK

Brisbane needs a plan to:

» make the most effective use of existing river access infrastructure

» improve river access for recreational craft, water taxis, tour boats and passive craft

» ensure Council’s development of river access infrastructure complements infrastructure delivered by the private sector and key riverfront developments

» ensure that new river access infrastructure is compatible with the operations of current river users.

This River Access Network is designed to help our city reach its potential as a river city.
BRISBANE’S OPPORTUNITY FOR A RIVER ACCESS NETWORK

The Brisbane River is our city’s greatest natural asset and the feature that defines Brisbane’s outdoor lifestyle and identity.

Historically, the meandering nature of the Brisbane River has been perceived as a barrier. However, in the last 20 years, the introduction of a world-class ferry service, new bridges and the Riverwalk network has vastly improved opportunities for residents to access and enjoy the river.

The next step in the evolution of our river city is to expand recreational and tourism opportunities on the river. This document sets out a plan for a world-class River Access Network for residents and tourists to experience the Brisbane River.

As part of our commitment to improving recreation and tourism opportunities, Council developed the River’s Edge Strategy to guide the future use of the inner-city reaches of the river. The River Access Network delivers the recommendations of the River’s Edge Strategy.
Brisbane’s identity is strongly defined by our status as a river city.

The river is the symbolic landmark of the city, the focus of stunning promotional images and used as shorthand for the city through motifs on buildings and in public spaces.

The river’s meandering course casts its presence widely across the city, bordering 47 of the city’s suburbs.

The river is inextricably linked to our subtropical lifestyle, anchoring our city’s most loved outdoor destinations (such as South Bank Parklands, Kangaroo Point Cliffs and New Farm Park).

The CityCat and Riverwalk networks are world-class infrastructure that provide excellent opportunities for public and active transport along the river.

The river is one of our primary tourist attractions – the Brisbane River, the CityCat network and the CityHopper ferries are three of the top five Brisbane attractions as rated by travellers on TripAdvisor.

The Brisbane River is already a great place, but we have the opportunity to do more based on:

» Brisbane is blessed with a climate that allows year-round outdoor recreation.

» Following the relocation of the city’s port and river-based industry to Moreton Bay, the inner-city river is largely free from industrial river traffic.

» The river connects major Brisbane growth precincts and key destinations.

We have an opportunity to reinforce our city’s reputation as a destination with a world-leading outdoor lifestyle centred on the river. Increasing opportunities to enjoy the river for recreation and tourism is the focus of the River Access Network.

The River Access Network is focused on the city reaches of the river between Hamilton Northshore and The University of Queensland at St Lucia.
The Brisbane River cuts a meandering path through the suburbs. Most reaches are 200-300 metres wide and are fringed by a diverse range of landscapes, including parks, roads, commercial and residential areas.

Public access is available to nearly 70% of the inner-city river banks, and riverside paths are well-used for walking and cycling.

**THE BRISBANE RIVER**

This part of the river passes through the most densely populated parts of Brisbane and connects many of the city’s most important destinations.

**Existing River Access Infrastructure**

- **25** Terminals
- **25 km+** Riverside paths
- Facilities and natural beaches

**LEGEND**

- CityCat/CityFerry Terminal
- Food precinct
- Gardens/parkland
- Education
- Cruise ship terminal
- Racing club
- Rock climbing
- Woolstores
- Queen’s Wharf Brisbane
- South Bank Parklands
- Cultural precinct
- Howard Smith Wharves
- Brisbane Powerhouse
- Newstead House

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RIVER ACCESS NETWORK ACTIVITIES

The River Access Network is focused on developing opportunities for river access for four recreational and tourism-related river activities.

TOUR BOATS

Tour boats provide scheduled tourism-oriented day-trips and act as chartered vessels for functions. They need centrally-located pick-up points at a small number of key riverside destinations.

Tour boat departures are currently focused around South Bank. It is proposed that Queen’s Wharf and the City Botanic Gardens join South Bank as the key tour boat departure locations. An expanded network of sites will facilitate the pick-up/drop-off of passengers at key riverside destinations such as Howard Smith Wharves and New Farm Park.

Brisbane’s tour boat industry is currently going through a period of change, with the loss of the overnight berthing location under the Riverside Expressway due to the Queen’s Wharf redevelopment.

An overnight berthing site is an important component of the River Access Network for tour boats. It needs to be a secure location that facilitates vessel servicing and incorporates access to parking for crew. Because of the nature of the facility it is unsuitable to be located at a major destination or near sensitive uses, but it is highly preferable that it is located within the inner-city reaches to reduce dead running.

The site that is well suited for overnight berthing is the stretch of the river on the eastern side of the Captain Cook Bridge at Kangaroo Point.

WATER Taxis

Water taxis represent a new transport alternative for travel on the river. These on-demand water taxis are booked in a similar way to a land-based taxi and do not operate scheduled services. The flexibility of these on-demand services meets a different market to the ferry service.

They are well suited to small group travel for recreation or business, directly linking destinations without intermediate stops. More expensive than ferries, water taxi users pay for convenience or for a special experience.

Key sites for water taxis would be located within walking distance to major riverside recreational, commercial, entertainment and high density residential areas.

Key locations in the water taxi River Access Network include:

- City locations – City Botanic Gardens, Queen’s Wharf, City Reach
- Major trip generators – The University of Queensland, New Farm Park/Brisbane Powerhouse, South Bank Parklands
- River-focused destinations – Howard Smith Wharves, Newstead Park
- High density redevelopment areas – West End/Kurilpa, Newstead/Teneriffe.
PASSIVE CRAFT
KAYAKS, CANOES AND PADDLE BOARDS

Passive craft are small active recreational craft. In addition to providing access to destinations, an important feature of the network for passive craft are sites located at regular intervals to allow users to rest and/or exit the river if they get tired or weather conditions change.

The network features three existing facilities in the lower reaches of Breakfast Creek and Norman Creek, which provide excellent launch facilities off the main flow of the river.

The passive craft network takes advantage of a variety of river access points, including:

» **Beaches** – Captain Burke Park, Kangaroo Point Cliffs, Merthyr Park and South Bank River Quay

» **Ramps** – Austral Street, Orleigh Park, Ross Street Park and Yoweggera Park

» **Pontoon**s – Mowbray Park, Naval Stores, Newstead House and Orleigh Park.

Not all of the infrastructure is suitable for launching passive craft. Due to the landside requirements for a launch facility (including close car parking and, ideally, trailer parking), these launch facilities are predominantly at either end of the study area, with most of the inner-city sites being dedicated to short-term use.

Dutton Park is considered a key launch site, given the existing car park and the former use of this site for the Dutton Park ferry.
RECREATIONAL CRAFT

YACHTS, SMALL BOATS AND JET SKIS

Recreational craft are privately-owned vessels used for recreational activities. The main user groups to be considered are below.

**Live-aboard users** are people living on their semi-permanently moored boat for an indefinite period.

The planned River Access Network focuses on maximising the use of inner-city sites for Brisbane’s residents, tourists and the city’s economy.

All of the River Access Hubs and some of the other River Access Network locations can provide short-term use facilities for recreational craft. These facilities perform a similar function to short-term commercial car parks for visits of up to a day. The City Botanic Gardens is the key site for recreational craft as it is a large centrally located site with suitable river conditions for this purpose.

The City Botanic Gardens currently accommodates approximately 50 recreational craft. Vessels tie up at mooring piles and tenders/dinghies are used to come ashore through a shared pontoon. Users have access to on-shore amenities that are contained within the Stamford Plaza development.

**Short-term users** are local resident day-trippers visiting the inner-city for up to a day. Council pontoons currently only allow for very short-term (e.g. 10 minutes) pick-up/drop-off.

**Medium-term and long-term users** are interstate or international tourists staying in Brisbane as part of a longer journey along the coast, for periods of up to two weeks or up to three months, respectively. These vessels are currently accommodated at the City Botanic Gardens and at private facilities.

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**10 RIVER ACCESS NETWORK**

RIVER ACCESS NETWORK
The River Access Network will allow for a variety of transport modes that will be complementary to each other.

CityCats and ferries will continue to act as the major service providers in the river transport network. Water taxis and tour boats provide new opportunities for business or special occasion travel. Recreational craft and passive craft provide additional recreational opportunities, predominantly for residents. All of these transport modes work together to cater to different traveller needs.

This table shows how river users can decide which form of transport to use for a particular journey.

For example, if affordability is the key consideration, the ferry networks are the best choice, but if route flexibility and speed are the key considerations, water taxis are a good option.
KEY FEATURES OF THE RIVER ACCESS NETWORK

- River Access Hubs are established as a focus for river access activities.
- A network approach is implemented to planning for river infrastructure.
- Council works with other parties who are delivering river access infrastructure.
- New river access sites fill gaps in the network.
- Supporting projects facilitate optimal use of the river access network.
RIVER ACCESS HUBS

River Access Hubs will be the focal points of the River Access Network. These major riverside destinations bring together all of the River Access Network activities into consolidated facilities.

The development of facilities at these high profile sites is an investment that will provide a substantial contribution to Brisbane’s tourism and economic development while also increasing the range of recreational opportunities for local residents.

The River Access Hubs will serve as catalysts for the development of the broader River Access Network and complement the investment in river activities being made by the private sector such as Queen’s Wharf and Howard Smith Wharves.

There are four River Access Hubs proposed in the River Access Network:
- City Botanic Gardens
- New Farm Park
- South Bank Parklands
- Kurilpa.

These sites are already popular for land-based recreation and have excellent access to public transport and/or car parking that allows tourists across the city to access the river.

It is expected that each site will be uniquely designed to reflect site-specific opportunities and constraints.

The following pages outline some of the key issues and opportunities at each site.
RIVER ACCESS HUBS

The intent of each River Access Hub is to provide unique functionality for tour boat pick-up and drop-off, provision for future water taxis, and short-term use of recreational craft and passive craft.

CITY BOTANIC GARDENS

The City Botanic Gardens currently accommodate approximately 50 private vessels in a 500 metre-long lease area. It is situated on a protected reach of the river with excellent access to the city and offers the best opportunity for a comprehensive River Access Hub.

There is an opportunity to establish facilities that provide for a wider range of river activities that benefit more people, while maintaining the valued views of watercraft from the gardens. In addition to the normal range of river activities, this hub also provides some berths for recreational craft.

NEW FARM PARK

New Farm Park presents an outstanding opportunity for improving river access. It’s an iconic riverside destination that currently offers only CityCat and CityFerry access to the river. It is an ideal water taxi pick-up location to service Brisbane Powerhouse patrons as well as New Farm Park picnickers.

The low and flat river’s edge is well suited to developing short-term use facilities for passive craft and larger recreational craft.
SOUTH BANK PARKLANDS

South Bank Parklands already functions as a partial River Access Hub with a tour boat pontoon, two public access pontoons and a small beach for passive craft landings at high tide. As it develops over time, this River Access Hub will be an extremely important component of the River Access Network, especially for tour boats and water taxis.

KURILPA

Kurilpa is a unique river access opportunity with 1.5 kilometres of river frontage in public ownership between the Kurilpa Bridge and Davies Park. The development of a River Access Hub forms an integral part of Council’s vision for this area, as this is a key destination where considerable population growth is anticipated. It is expected that this hub will be delivered as part of development in the area.
RIVER ACCESS HUB EXAMPLE

Perth provides a recent example of a large River Access Hub at the Elizabeth Quay precinct. This major mixed-use urban renewal project is under development on the banks of the Swan River in the city centre. The centrepiece of the development is ‘The Inlet’ that contains a ferry terminal, tour boat berths, 24 short stay recreational berths and a small sand ramp which could be used by kayaks. The harbour style of Elizabeth Quay is different to the Brisbane River context; however, some of the objectives are similar.
Brisbane already has a diverse range of river access sites in the inner-city, including pontoons, ramps and beaches. This map shows existing river access infrastructure in the inner-city.

Many river sites are attractive for multiple river activities. An important element of an effective River Access Network is the prioritisation of activities for particular locations in the circumstance where it is not possible for all activities to safely co-locate.

We can ensure safe usage of the sites by making it clear which activities are available at each site so everyone has equitable and safe access to the river.

We will:
» prioritise the sites closest to the biggest tourist destinations for tour boats
» prioritise sites in key residential and commercial areas for water taxis and short-term use by recreational craft
» prioritise sites with car parking for launching passive craft
» prioritise natural beaches and sites that are sensitive to night time use for short-term use by passive craft.
The River Access Network is the opportunity for river access infrastructure to be delivered with other parties. Over the next five years major new riverfront developments will transform how the city relates to the river.

» The Queen’s Wharf development will significantly improve public access to the river and incorporate extensive river access infrastructure.

» The Howard Smith Wharves development will reactivate a historic precinct with riverside parkland and commercial development.

» Future redevelopment of the City Reach will enhance river access opportunities in this key CBD location.

» Future redevelopment of the Queensland Maritime Museum offers an opportunity for improved river access infrastructure befitting its maritime history.

» The future mixed-use development of the Teneriffe Riverside Marine and former Toowong ABC sites, and the ongoing development of the Northshore Hamilton, Dockside and The University of Queensland precincts provides the opportunity for river access to be integrated into these sites.
GAPS IN THE NETWORK – POTENTIAL RIVER ACCESS SITES

The River Access Network aims to provide more convenient ways for Brisbane residents and tourists to access the river. To achieve this, new infrastructure should be focused in areas where there is a gap in the network.

Identifying the gaps gives Council a clear plan for how river access sites and River Access Hubs can be located to achieve the best placement of infrastructure to create a cohesive network.

Some of the key considerations when evaluating potential sites to fill gaps in the network include:

» potential for conflict with bridges, ferries, rowers and other craft
» river currents and visibility around bends
» flood risk and river bed profile
» availability of access from the land
» nearby land uses
» proximity to other sites that are suitable for the same river activity.

Most of the potential river access sites are parks that don’t currently offer opportunities for public access onto the river other than by ferry.

The exception is the Bulimba Barracks site, which is currently owned by the Australian Government but is intended to be redeveloped in the near future to include a large riverfront park as part of a mixed-use development.

Potential River Access Sites

LEGEND

Potential River Access Sites
TOUR BOATS
The River Access Network facilitates the expansion of Brisbane’s tour boat industry by establishing a larger network of locations for passenger pick-up and drop-off in key tourist destinations. Key to the future success of the tour boat industry will be maximising the connections to other tourism experiences in the region, including North Stradbroke Island, Moreton Island and Moreton Bay.

WATER TAXIS
Council’s role in facilitating water taxis is as the biggest owner of river infrastructure suitable for use by water taxis, and as the manager of riverside parkland in key inner-city locations. The River Access Network addresses a key requirement for the success of water taxis – the establishment of a network of pick-up and drop-off sites in major residential and commercial precincts and tourist destinations. Specifications will be developed and applied across the network of pontoons designated for water taxis to ensure a consistent passenger experience and operational certainty.

HELIPAD
The potential city centre tourist helipad will unlock a new way for tourists to appreciate the beauty of Brisbane from the air.

CONNECTIONS
As the River Access Network develops, the river will increasingly become the key connection for tourists to Brisbane’s most important destinations. Tourists will be able to use river transport as their main method of exploring the city and visiting Moreton Bay and the islands. Tour boats and water taxis will complement the CityCats and CityHoppers to provide a network unrivalled in convenience for tourists. The key to unlocking this potential will be to develop information and signage tailored to tourists, and to enhance the linkages between river access locations and nearby destinations.

UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL FOR TOURISM ACTIVATION
The Brisbane River is already a popular destination for tourists. A ride on a CityCat is well established as a must-do Brisbane experience, and the river is a key part of the attraction of many of our city’s most important tourist destinations, such as South Bank Parklands, Kangaroo Point Cliffs and New Farm Park. However, Brisbane has an opportunity to provide even more ways for tourists to enjoy the river and riverside destinations.
UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF PASSIVE RECREATIONAL CRAFT

The River Access Network addresses some of the key barriers to kayaking and paddle boarding in the river, including providing a network of conveniently located launch sites and short-term use sites in places the kayaker wants to visit (such as Captain Burke Park beach at Kangaroo Point, pictured in this artist’s visualisation). Other barriers remain that should be considered in the design of the River Access Network.

The ability to temporarily store and secure passive craft is important. Design of new or upgraded infrastructure should include opportunities for short-term securing of the craft and ancillary items while the user is on shore enjoying their destination.

Some of the potential launch sites are located within high density residential areas and may be attractive for regular use by local residents. Consideration could be given to providing some landside long-term secured storage facilities at selected sites, which could be paid for by the user (similar concept to long-term bike storage at train stations).

An innovative idea is a kayak share scheme, where users would pick-up and drop-off shared kayaks. There is an opportunity to integrate a one-way kayak trip (e.g. with the tide) with a return journey via ferry or CityCycle.

When the tide turns another user could return the kayak the other way, allowing some natural cycling through of the kayaks between locations.

A scheme with some similarities commenced operation in Minnesota, USA in 2016. The Mississippi River Paddle Share includes three stations in the vicinity of Minneapolis and provides a small number of pre-defined routes. All craft are pre-booked and there are a number of safety rules in place when the river conditions are adverse.

There is the potential for this type of scheme to transform use of the river for kayaking, as it would open it up to a much broader user base and expand the recreational and tourist offering on the river.
PROPOSED RIVER ACCESS NETWORK MAPS
Tour boat pick-up and drop-off

To proposed Luggage Point Cruise Ship Terminal and Moreton Bay.

To Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary.

City Botanic Gardens

Maritime Museum

New Farm Park

Howard Smith Wharves

Northshore Hamilton

Kingsford Smith Drive