

PETITION - HOLLOWAYS BEACH EROSION

CIA | 81/1/13 | #7850035

RECOMMENDATION:**That Council:**

- 1. Notes the petition received regarding the erosion of Holloways Beach.**
- 2. Notes the actions already being undertaken by Council.**

INTERESTED PARTIES:

Residents and ratepayers of Holloways beach.
Signatories of the petition.

Note: The identification of interested parties is provided on a best endeavours basis by Council Officers and may not be exhaustive.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

On 19 March 2026, Council received a petition signed by 104 residents and community members requesting urgent action to address ongoing coastal erosion at Holloways Beach, particularly near Barr Creek. Concerns raised include accelerated shoreline recession, loss of mature coastal vegetation, saltwater intrusion into former wetland areas, and the effectiveness of existing protection measures.

The area of concern includes Lot 100 on CP894862, state land managed by Council as a beach protection erosion buffer. While recent erosion in this area has been significant, historical studies and aerial imagery confirm it is part of a highly dynamic creek mouth system that has shifted over time and previously existed as a largely unvegetated saltwater lagoon.

Council has already undertaken extensive assessment and planning in relation to coastal erosion at Holloways Beach, including the Coastal Hazard Adaptation Strategy (2022) and the Cairns Shoreline Erosion Management Plan (SEMP) Stages 1 and 2 (2020–2021). In February 2026, Council engaged coastal engineering firm BMT to review recent accelerated erosion and the effectiveness of existing measures, with further investigations proposed to assess potential improvements to coastal structures.

Holloways Beach remains at extreme risk of erosion. Council recognises the significant environmental, recreational, cultural, and economic value of the foreshore and will continue to manage coastal risks within existing strategic, financial, and statutory

frameworks. Council will continue to pursue external funding opportunities to support appropriate coastal protection works.

The report recommends noting the petition and the actions already underway.

BACKGROUND:

On Thursday 19 March 2026 a petition with 104 signatures was received via the Council Customer Service email inbox:

“To: Chief Executive Officer, Cairns Regional Council

We, the undersigned residents and community members, formally petition Council to take urgent and sustainable action to address the severe and accelerating coastal erosion occurring along the entirety of Holloways Beach.

Erosion has intensified dramatically in recent months. With each three-metre high tide, significant sections of foreshore are being lost. Mature coastal trees – including coconut palms, large casuarinas, and almond trees – are collapsing into the sea as the shoreline continues to recede.

At the southern end near Barr Creek, a former freshwater billabong and paperbark wetland – once home to frog habitat – is being damaged by saltwater intrusion. Trees are showing clear signs of dieback, and important habitat has been lost.

Current rock walls and sand replacement appear to be short-term measures that are not preventing continued erosion.

We respectfully request that Council:

- Conduct an urgent and transparent coastal impact assessment*
- Investigate sustainable long-term coastal protection options*
- Consider the feasibility of an offshore artificial (“false”) reef constructed parallel to the shoreline*
- Engage directly with the Holloways Beach community*

Without immediate action, Holloways Beach risks further land loss, environmental degradation, and the permanent destruction of valuable coastal and wetland ecosystems.

We urge Council to act now.”

COMMENT:

The petition relates to the “entirety of Holloways Beach”, and mentions the “southern end near Barr Creek, a former freshwater billabong and paperbark wetland” – this is believed to relate to Lot 100 on CP894862, a parcel of state land for which Council is trustee, a reserve for the purpose of a beach protection erosion buffer. This parcel has recently been severely affected by significant and accelerated shoreline erosion. This has happened in the past and historical studies confirm that area is part of an active and dynamic creek mouth, and the watercourse has shifted significantly over time. The area appears to be a saltwater lagoon largely devoid of vegetation in aerial photography from 1952.

In relation to the actions requested in the petition, the following actions have already been completed / underway:

1. Conduct an urgent and transparent coastal impact assessment
 - This has already occurred, in the form of:
 - § The Coastal Hazard Adaptation Strategy (BMT and others 2022) which is publicly available on the Council website.
 - § Cairns Shoreline Erosion Management Plan (SEMP) Stage 1 – Coastal Processes (BMT 2020)
 - § Cairns Shoreline Erosion Management Plan (SEMP) Stage 2 – Management Options (BMT 2021)
 - Further assessment is currently underway with Coastal Engineering Firm BMT having been engaged in February 2026 to review the SEMP considering the recently observed significant and accelerated shoreline erosion at Lot 100 on CP894862.
 - Further investigation is also proposed with Coastal Engineering Firm International Coastal Management (ICM) to review the benefits of reforming the existing Pandanus and Oleander Street Groynes (constructed 2019) into nearshore breakwaters for improved performance as per those constructed to the north in 2025.
2. Investigate sustainable long-term coastal protection options
 - This has already occurred / underway as noted in Item 1 above.
3. Consider the feasibility of an offshore artificial (“false”) reef constructed parallel to the shoreline
 - Not considered feasible due to excessive cost.
 - § The existing smaller hard infrastructure measures including the rock wall from Cassia Street to Pandanus Street (funded by adjacent properties in the early 2000s); the Pandanus and Oleander Street Groynes (2019) and the three northern breakwaters (2025) had to be staged over 25 years due to the high cost.
 - § Similarly prior soft measures of sand nourishment have been infrequent and staged over many years due to the high cost.
 - Not feasible in the vicinity of Barr Creek, from Marshall Street, Machans Beach to Cassia Street, Holloways beach, due to interference with the natural movement of the creek mouth and adverse impacts on flooding.
 - Council will however continue to pursue funding opportunities for both hard and soft coastal protection measures such as the recent applications for Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) – Coastal Recovery Programs.
4. Engage directly with the Holloways Beach community
 - The development of the Coastal Hazard Adaptation Strategy 2022 included a public consultation phase.
 - The document remains publicly available on the Council website.

OPTIONS:

Option 1 (Recommended)

That Council:

1. Notes the petition received regarding the erosion of Holloways Beach.
2. Notes the actions already being undertaken by Council.

Option 2

That Council does not support the recommendation and adopts an alternate course of action.

CONSIDERATIONS:

Risk Management:

Holloways Beach generally remains at extreme risk of ongoing coastal erosion despite both hard and soft coastal protection measures applied to date.

The properties in the vicinity of Lot 100 on CP894862 (Coconut, Tamarind and Willow Streets) do not currently appear to be at severe risk of coastal erosion. They are however, at severe risk of inundation due to storm surge, particularly given the loss of the buffer previously provided by Lot 100.

Council Finance and the Local Economy:

Council does not currently have any specific budget allowance for significant coastal protection works at Holloways Beach in the 10-year capital works program.

The area is of value to the local economy due to the beach and foreshore recreational areas.

Community and Cultural Heritage:

The beach and foreshore areas are of significance to the community due to their recreational, environmental and cultural value.

Natural Environment:

The area is environmentally significant due to being habitat for marine and estuarine flora and fauna.

Corporate and Operational Plans:

The issue relates to Focus 2 (Natural Assets) of the Corporate Plan.

Statutory:

Any hard infrastructure works would be subject to statutory planning and environmental approval requirements.

CONSULTATION:

The development of the Coastal Hazard Adaptation Strategy 2022 included a public consultation phase

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 – Aerial Photography from 2025.

Attachment 2 – Aerial Photography from 1952. Lot 100 on CP894862 area appears to be a saltwater lagoon largely devoid of vegetation.

Attachment 3 – Extract from Cairns Shoreline Erosion Management Plan (SEMP) Update Stage 1 - Coastal Processes (BMT 2020)



Martin Perkowicz
Executive Manager Works

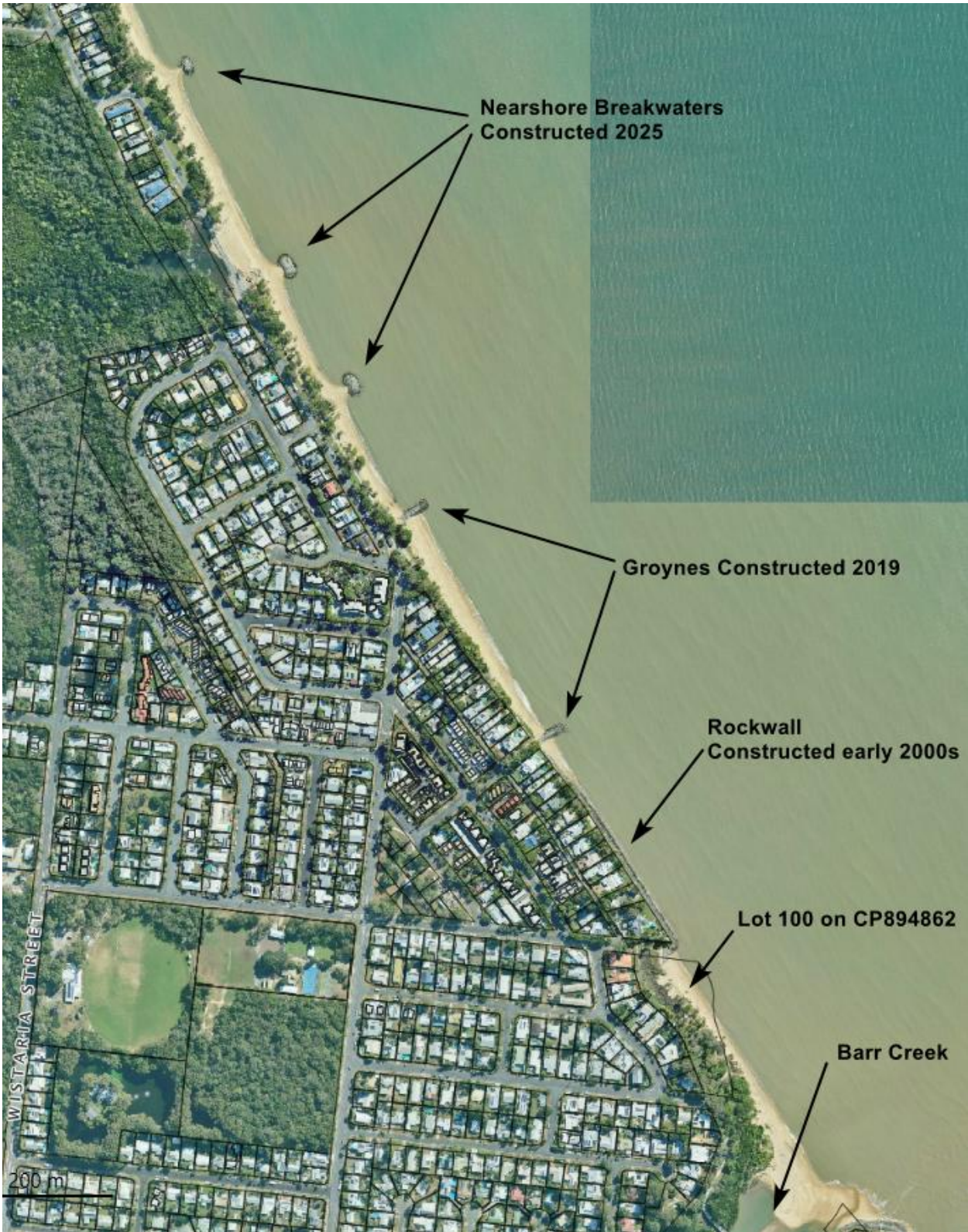


Toni Veronese
Associate Director Service Delivery



Mark Wuth
Director Cairns Infrastructure and Assets

Attachment 1 – Aerial Photography from 2025.




Attachment 2 – Aerial Photography from 1952. Lot 100 on CP894862 area appears to be a saltwater lagoon largely devoid of vegetation.



**Attachment 3 – Extract from Cairns Shoreline Erosion Management Plan (SEMP)
Update Stage 1 - Coastal Processes (BMT 2020)**



<p>Title: Historical Shoreline Analysis Barr Creek and Southern Holloways Beach</p>		<p>Figure: D-4</p>	<p>Rev: A</p>
<p><small>BMT WBM endeavours to ensure that the information provided in this map is correct at the time of publication. BMT WBM does not warrant, guarantee or make representations regarding the currency and accuracy of information contained in this map.</small></p>		<p>0 100 200m Approx. Scale</p>	
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