

**SCOPING STUDY
FOR
BRUNSWICK HEADS
COLLEGE OF MARINE STUDIES
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The College of Marine Studies Inc (COMS) is a community based association that was created to establish a centre that would foster the art and skill of traditional timber boat building and related marine activities based around existing facilities at the Brunswick Heads boat harbour. The objective is to develop a facility that will provide services to the marine industry primarily in timber boat building and maintenance and also deliver trade training for the marine industry in the Northern Rivers / Gold Coast region.

In December 2007 the NSW Department of Lands released a draft strategic plan for the development of Crown Lands around the Brunswick Heads foreshore, which includes the existing boat harbour. When the plan is finalised, it is expected that the NSW Government will call for expressions of interest for the use of those Crown Lands.

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the viability of the COMS proposal as a prerequisite to lodging an expression of interest for the use of the Crown Land and associated assets.

It is proposed that the facility be situated within the Brunswick Heads boat harbour consisting of the slipway with adjoining hard stand in the north western corner; vacant land and storage sheds along the western side; and 23 mooring berths along the western and southern waterlines.

The proposed development does not restrict access to the river or the foreshore.

The vision is to create a commercially viable, community based, not-for-profit organisation that will become a hub of activity for the marine industry. The facility will remain in keeping with the heritage and desired development profile for the area. It will actively engage with the local community and provide ongoing opportunities for employment and training that will be focused on the traditional techniques of timber boat building, but also encompass modern practices and materials. It will become the centre of excellence for timber boat building on the east coast of Australia

COMS will become a registered training organisation (RTO) that provides high quality training that is linked to its repair and maintenance capability in timber and other materials for boats up to 50 tonnes. It will primarily attract clients from the Northern Rivers of NSW and South East Queensland through its exceptional skill levels and industry relationships.

The objective is to focus the activities of the facility on timber boats. This will help to define the culture of the project and maintain the connection with the heritage of Brunswick Heads and the tone of development that is sought. In order to offer a complete service to the market however, repair and refit services for boats constructed from other materials will also be offered. Any major work required on fibre composite or aluminium vessels could be carried out in nearby industrial estates in order to preserve the character of the boat harbour precinct.

The study has been based on a requirement to establish facilities that would allow it to carry out its training activities as well as refurbishing the slipway as part of the repair and refurbishment capability. In order for the proposal to proceed the slipway work will need to be done regardless, and demountable class rooms placed on the vacant land - however there is an alternative available for the required training accommodation.

Consideration should be given to providing COMS with a leasehold tenure over the unoccupied Fins Restaurant building which is situated around 200m upstream adjacent to the new highway. A temporary leasehold tenure would assist, at least initially, in defraying project capital costs. This assumes that it is not allowed to fall into further disrepair as a consequence of it being unoccupied.

The centrepiece of the proposed project is the existing slipway which is in need of extensive refurbishment.

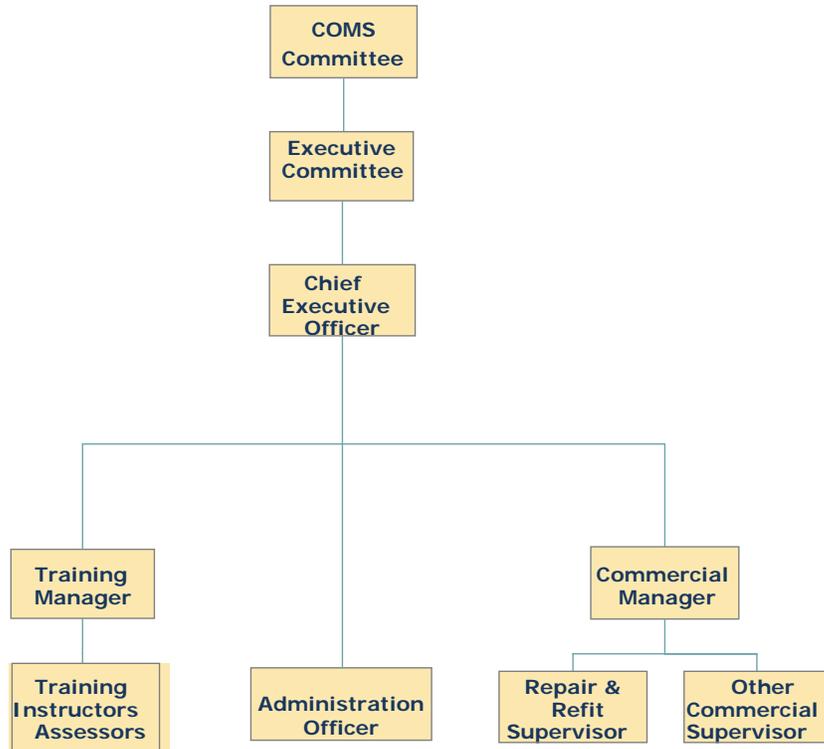
Temporary classrooms would not be required if the Fins building were made available, but a shed for the restoration of the Skipjack would still need to be erected.

From a staffing perspective, only three management/administrative positions will be required for the early stage development of the facility. The CEO role and Commercial Manager's roles will be combined and an Administration Officer will be required, initially on a part time basis. A Training Manager will also be required during this period.

Additional staff can be appointed on an as needs basis, as the growth of the facility evolves.

The initial organisation structure will be as follows:

COMS ORGANISATION CHART



The proposal complies with many existing Government & Community Plans

The main sources of revenue for the project will come from training, boat repair, mooring and slipway fees and other services such as insurance surveys and kit boat sales.

There are also four key sources of funding available for the initial capital requirements of the project.

The critical success factors for the project are:

- a) Gaining secure tenure of the slipway and the adjoining vacant Crown Land or the Fins building
- b) Obtaining funding for the capital works and initial operating cash requirements
- c) Securing the services of key management staff at community service rates rather than commercial rates
- d) Ensuring that the key people who have been identified as potential trainers are engaged with and committed to the project
- e) Attracting the target level of trainees
- f) Attracting the target level of boat repair business.

Access to the Fins building provides a better solution than establishing new classrooms, but can be overcome if required by sourcing the required funds.

The project has attracted a wide level of local support and it would appear that the community has embraced it and is keen for it to proceed.

The COMS concept is consistent with the heritage of the area and the community's development aspirations for the foreshore precinct and will provide employment and training opportunities in Brunswick Heads without impacting on the environment. It also fits within the requirements of current State Government planning guidelines that are targeted at education and training and rural and regional development.

The project will be reliant on government funding in order to get established, but should be capable of sustaining itself from its second year of operation onwards. This report suggests a high level of feasibility and a detailed business plan should be prepared to fine tune the analysis.

It is recommended that an expression of interest be lodged with the NSW Department of Lands to secure the Crown Land assets required to establish COMS using the Brunswick Heads slipway and that the NSW Roads and Traffic Authority be approached for a lease (up to 3 years) for the use of the Fins building as a temporary classroom facility. In the meantime, applications for funding and the preparation of a business plan should be pursued.