The following issues were identified through a combination of the scientific evidence provided in the 2014 University of NSW Water Research Laboratory Report, expert Roads and Maritime boating knowledge, strategic Maritime Management Centre management advice and community and stakeholder feedback.

The proposed outcomes represent a compromise to meet the environmental needs of the river consistent with the precautionary principle, and to provide certainty for boaters and local businesses to use the river for recreation and commercial benefit. They seek to improve amenity for all river users and local residents and to ensure the ongoing, sustainable enjoyment of the river.

Proposed actions

1. **No new speed or wash restrictions between Moleville Rocks and Ulmarra**
   
   *Reason* – The WRL Report confirms that the majority of this stretch of river is suitable for wake generating activity under assumed tolerances, provided activities occur towards the middle of the river and riverbank remediation occurs at key sites.

2. **Installation of yellow (distance off) marker buoys to encourage wake generating activities in most appropriate sections of river and shore based signage to communicate restrictions.**
   
   *Reason* – To minimise erosion, boating activities should generally be encouraged towards the centre of the river. Distance off buoys and land based signage are considered the most appropriate solutions to convey the message about where best to undertake these activities. However, the centre line of the river may not always be the most appropriate course in all locations, with wake generating activity likely to have minimal impact on banks in areas that are resistant to erosion, such as rock embankments. RMS will explore mapping options to provide advice to users on the most suitable areas to undertake activities that generate substantial wake. Cardinal or lateral marks will not be used as they are for identifying safe navigation channels.

3. **New no slow-tow zone for northern channel between Susan Island and Grafton**

   *Reason* – The banks of the northern channel are subject to substantial erosion, the area is popular with rowers and small powered boats, and the outside channel is more suitable for wake generating activity. This should reduce user conflict while maintaining unrestricted usage of the southern channel.
4. New no slow-tow zone between Rogans Bridge and Moleville Rocks

*Reason* – The WRL Report identifies this section as highly eroded and too narrow to focus wake-generating activities into the middle of the river to effectively limit erosion. The no slow tow restriction is a two year temporary restriction while riverbank remediation is undertaken and its effectiveness will be subject to review.

5. Prepare scope of works for riverbank remediation at sites identified in WRL Report

*Reason* – A number of sites along the river have been identified for remediation in the short and medium term. MMC, Clarence Valley Council, Northern Local Land Services and the NSW Soil Conservation Service, are working together to identify the actions and costs of bank remediation at specific locations identified in the WRL Report. The focus will be on implementing works at key priority sites during 2015, with medium-priority works considered subject to feasibility.

6. Work with landowners to improve banks

*Reason* - Local landowners have a role to play in riverbank remediation. The Committee will work with local landowners to explore opportunities for bank remediation, revegetation, and stock access management.

7. Code of Conduct implementation and support for local businesses to educate operators

*Reason* – The Clarence River Awareness Group has developed a Code of Conduct for tow sports on the River. MMC will support its implementation and distribution and will assist local boating clubs and business operators to provide boating education and training to users through its community grants program.

8. Ongoing education and increased compliance during implementation

*Reason* – During implementation there will be a need for increased compliance operations from RMS. There will also be the need for immediate and ongoing education, particularly during the boating season, for boaters and local residents to ensure that everyone understands the new restrictions and boating regulations more generally. This will include deployment of boating education officers during the boating season.

MMC will also explore opportunities to educate QLD boaters on towing rules and codes of conduct.

9. Establish a Clarence Riverbank Project Management Committee to implement the Plan, monitor river state, consult with stakeholders and community and recommend any changes

*Reason* - A number of agencies are responsible for various aspects of this plan and an overarching committee with representatives from MMC, RMS, LLS and CVC is required to implement its Actions. The Committee will meet quarterly to discuss the status of the Plan, progress actions and discuss any emerging issues. In the event of a significant flood, the Committee will make recommendations to the General Manager, MMC on whether there is a need for any additional temporary restrictions. The Committee will also brief stakeholders and the community twice a year on the status of the Plan.
10. Ongoing monitoring and further research

*Reason* - Ongoing monitoring of riverbanks will be required, including the condition of banks, to assess the effectiveness of riverbank remediation works and boating restrictions. Further research will also be undertaken to confirm boat pass numbers and activities on the river and to understand any effects of dredging in the region.

11. Call for locations to undertake wake generating activity

*Reason* - MMC is interested to hear from the tow sports community about locations that are well suited to tow sports and wake generating activities and would like to hear of any proposals for suitable locations to establish dedicated tow sport areas and facilities.

12. Temporary measures and ongoing review

*Reason* – the actions outlined are all temporary measures which will be in place for a period of two years. At the end of this period the effectiveness of the Plan will be assessed by the Committee.

**Notes:**

**Aquatic Events**

The restrictions above in no way affect the conduct of aquatic events such as the annual Grafton Bridge 2 Bridge Race. The above actions are designed to alleviate the cumulative impact of wash. As aquatic events are held infrequently and occasionally, they are not considered to have a substantial or ongoing impact on riverbank health.

**New restrictions**

The proposed Marine Safety Regulation 2015 introduces new powers to restrict, through signage, the operation of vessels that generate a large wave or wake for the purposes of wakeboarding or wake surfing, or other towing activities, such as through the use of additional ballast. A new penalty notice offence of $500 will apply to vessel owners who breach these restrictions, if the matter goes to court a fine of up to $5,500 could be imposed. The new Regulation will commence in late 2015.

It is proposed to use these new powers to restrict the operation of heavy wave or wake generating boats in the Rogans Bridge to Moleville Rocks and Susan Island areas. Restrictions on the operation of wake generating boats will only apply to specific areas and signs will advise restrictions that apply. These restrictions will not apply if the same vessel is used in the same area for other activities that do not generate a large wake, such as water-skiing or cruising.

**Temporary Implementation**

It is intended that the proposed restrictions will commence on 1 September 2015. This coincides with the new regulatory mechanisms on which the Plan is based. Temporary restrictions will therefore be in place until September 2017, subject to review.

**Bank Remediation Works** - Preliminary investigations to scope bank remediation works are currently underway.

**Comment**

Comment on the proposed actions should be provided to maritime@transport.nsw.gov.au by 24 July 2015.