



Intention to amend Barwon River waterway rules

The Corangamite Catchment Management Authority (CMA) is seeking to amend the waterway rules for the Barwon River through Geelong. This relates to the stretch of river from Orana Road to the Lower Breakwater (just upstream of Lake Connewarre). The Corangamite CMA is the appointed waterway manager for this stretch of the river under the *Marine Safety Act 2010* and is making this request to Safe Transport Victoria - Maritime to change the waterway rules. The proposed changes to the rules are based on the CMA's core waterway management functions, which are:

- Managing vessel activities and movement, moorings and berthing locations, and navigational aids that identify regulations and hazards, anchorage and dredging areas
- Minimising the risk of environmental damage from the operation of vessels
- Allowing for the safety and equity of on-water use on the Barwon River for a broad range of users
- Cultural heritage management and considerations
- Ensuring compatibility of waterway use with surrounding land.

BACKGROUND

Waterway rules

The Barwon River is subject to state-wide rules that apply for all waters in Victoria, as well as local scheduled operating and zoning rules that are specific to the Barwon River. These rules are approved by Maritime Safety Victoria under Part 5.1 of the *Marine Safety Act 2010*.

Waterway rules are designed to provide a safe operating environment, to cater for a wide range of boating and water activities, to separate different activities where needed on the basis of safety, and to reflect local conditions.

The current waterway rules for the Barwon River (between the Lower Breakwater and Orana Road) are detailed in Schedule 7 of Maritime Safety Victoria's [Vessel Operating and Zoning Rules for Victorian Waters](#). A map of this area and the current rules is attached (refer Figure 1).

Why review the rules?

The Corangamite CMA has identified a need to review and update the waterway rules for the Barwon River following the planned removal of four spans of the Ovoid Sewer Aqueduct in Breakwater. Barwon Water has been granted a permit by Heritage Victoria to remove the spans for the purposes of public safety and improving access to the Barwon River and surrounding land. The removal of the spans opens the opportunity for the public to access the lower part of the river more freely.

As the rules have not been updated since 1991, the removal of part of the Ovoid Sewer Aqueduct provides the Corangamite CMA the opportunity to review the waterway rules, not just for the lower part of the river, but for the entire stretch from Orana Road to the Lower Breakwater.

CONSULTATION – WHAT WE’VE DONE SO FAR

The focus to date has been on meeting with the main agency stakeholders, Traditional Owners, and user groups of the Barwon River. The purpose of the consultation has been to understand how different organisations and groups use the river; their priorities and expectations for future use; any changes they’d like to see made to the rules; and any other issues or concerns that could be addressed through the rule review.

This consultation has been undertaken in-person, via Teams and on-site. It has included numerous group workshops and meetings, including three meetings of the Barwon River Users Group (BRUG), an agency meeting (including Barwon Water, the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), Victorian Fisheries Authority, Parks Victoria and the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC)) and one-on-one with meetings with key user groups (e.g. Barwon Valley Water Ski Club, Geelong Rowing Association, Geelong Water Ski Club and VRfish). We have also consulted with the area’s Traditional Owners the Wadawurrung and have held regular meetings with Safe Transport Victoria - Maritime. There was also significant community interest in the proposed changes generated through the engagement undertaken through the public release of the draft Kitjarra-dja-bul Bullarto langi-ut masterplan.

The feedback collected through the consultation process has helped identify what rules should be amended.

PUBLIC EXHIBITION PHASE

We are now exhibiting the final draft rules (*as per the attached proposed waterway rules pages 4-10*) for general public consultation.

This public consultation phase will be open for four weeks from Wednesday the 7th of February 2024 to Wednesday 6th of March 2024. The following link [Intention to amend the Barwon River Waterway rules](#) provides more detail on how to provide comment during this period.

A community drop-in session to view the draft rules and discuss the proposed changes with the Corangamite CMA will be held on Wednesday the 14th of February from 4:30 to 6:30pm at the Nyaal Meeting Room (Level 2) Geelong Library and Heritage Centre at 51 Little Malop St, Geelong.

ATTACHMENT: PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE WATERWAY RULES

The attachment below outlines the draft changes to the rules and considerations for proposing these changes for the two sections of Barwon River:

- Northern reach: Orana Road to Gundog Lane
- Southern reach: Gundog Lane to Lower Breakwater.

Maps of the proposed changes for both the northern and southern reaches are detailed in Figures 2 and 3 respectively.

The Corangamite Catchment Management Authority acknowledges the Wadawurrung as the Traditional Owners of the Country on which the Barwon River through Geelong flows. The CMA recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and culture and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. Moreover, the CMA express gratitude for the knowledge and insight that Traditional Owner and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people contribute to our shared work.

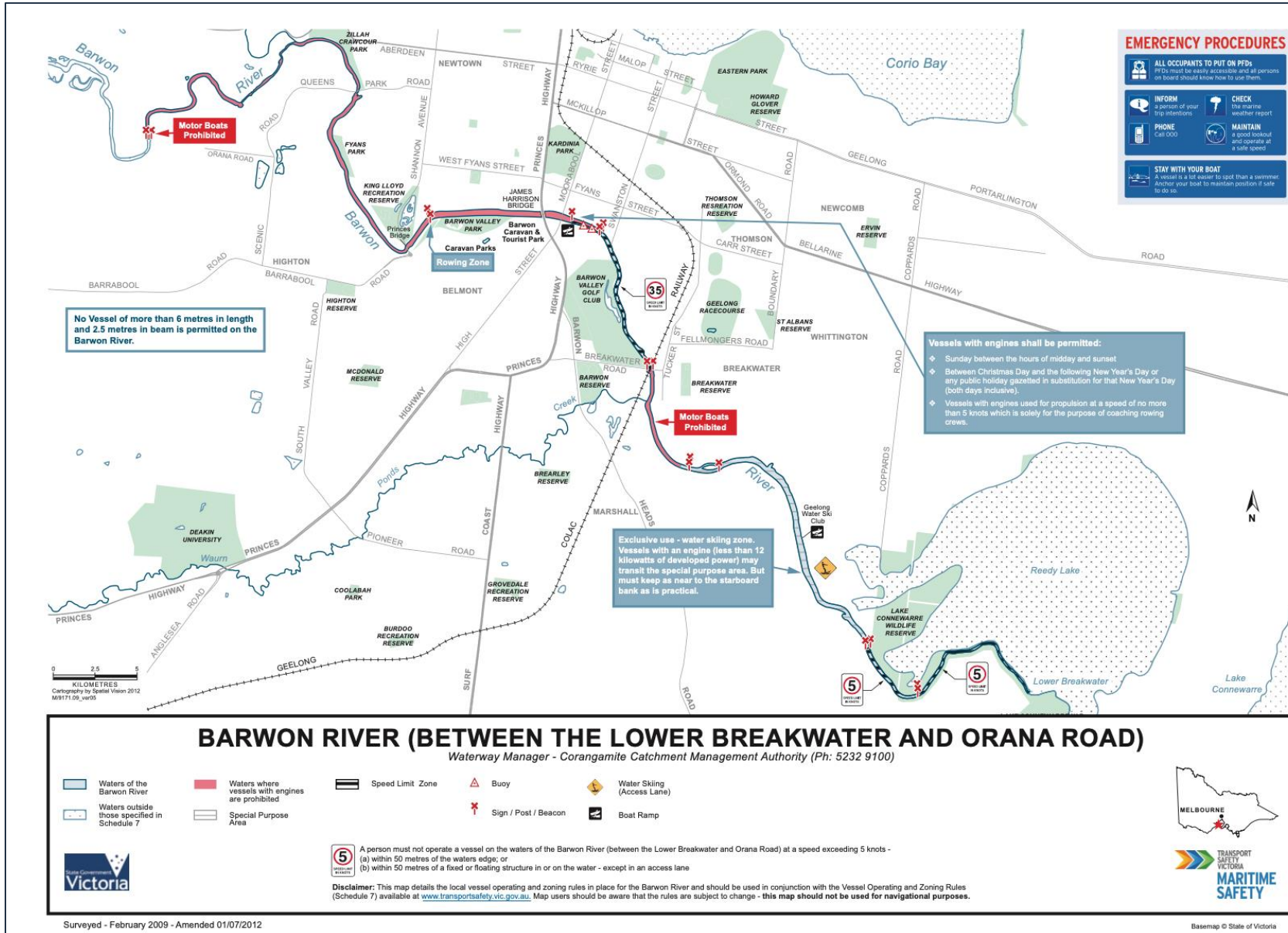


Figure 1: Current Barwon River waterway rules

Attachment: Proposed changes to the Barwon River waterway rules

NORTHERN REACH: ORANA ROAD TO GUNDOG LANE

DRIVERS OF CHANGE AND RISKS

Drivers of change

Confusion as to whether the speed restriction applies to rowers operating in this zone outside designated events. The current wording of the rules is unclear.

Rowers have expressed an interest in safely accessing the 35-knot zone for the purposes of early morning training.

Risks

This is a high use zone. The inclusion of motorboats on weekends in particular presents safety concerns.

There are safety concerns relating to 'blind' turning points for non-powered watercraft around the canoe landing points.

The bridge columns present potential safety hazards (e.g. Moorabool St Bridge), and there is currently a need for more suitable signage / buoys around the columns.

KEY STAKEHOLDER ISSUES

Geelong Rowing Association has expressed confusion around the wording, and indicated that rowers outside events (i.e. for the purposes of training) will be exceeding speeds of 5-knots.

Geelong Rowing Association has also expressed a request to have greater access to the river for training purposes. Safe access to the downstream 35 knot area to Gundog Lane would address this request.

Rowers have also received complaints (and subsequent restrictions have been applied) regarding the use of loudspeakers during early morning training in the current rowing zone. Access to the 35-knot zone would potentially allow loudspeakers to be used as part of morning training (as this area is not primarily a residential area).

Barwon Valley Ski Club would like continued use of the 35-knot zone and do not support designated times.

We have met with both the Barwon Valley Ski Club and Geelong Rowing Association to directly hear their concerns and requests. In response to this engagement and the issues raised above, the following changes to the waterway rules are proposed.

PROPOSED CHANGES

- There is currently no restriction for rowers using the river outside events to be traveling faster than 5 knots, as there is no speed restriction for non-powered vessels in the prohibited motorboat zone (clause 7.4) or the 35-knot powered zone – **so no change required**.
- **Amend** the zone where vessels with engines are prohibited, to allow any powered vessel travelling less than 10 knots, provided it is used solely for the purpose of coaching rowing crews on the river.
- The current 35 knot speed limit zone used for water skiing does not prevent early morning rowing training and use by canoes and kayaks, which the Barwon Valley Ski Club supports – **so no change required**.
- **Address safety issues through appropriate mechanisms**, (i.e. other than through the waterway rules). This would include the installation of signage and/or buoys - such as at the blind turning points at the canoe landings and at the columns of the Moorabool St Bridge.

BENEFICIARIES AND BENEFITS

Beneficiaries:

- Rowers using the river outside events, such as for the purpose of training.
- Users of unpowered vessels (i.e. recreational canoers and kayakers)
- Barwon Valley Ski Club, as there is no change to their current access to the 35-knot speed limit zone used for water skiing.

Benefits:

- Rowers (and other non-powered vessels) are not restricted by the existing 35 knot speed limit.
- Addresses the core principles of safety and equity of access e.g:
 - Accommodating multi-use of the river, whilst enabling continued use by existing users (Barwon Valley Ski Club and the Geelong Rowing Association)
 - Responds to safety issues through appropriate mechanisms other than the waterway rules i.e. signage and/or buoys.
 - Ensures continued equity of access to encourage more people to improve their health and wellbeing through water activities.

MAP OF PROPOSED CHANGES

A map highlighting the proposed changes to the Barwon waterway rules for the northern reach is provided in Figure 2 below.



Figure 2: Proposed Barwon River waterway rules for the northern reach: Orana Road to Gundog Lane

SOUTHERN REACH: GUNDOG LANE TO THE LOWER BREAKWATER

DRIVER FOR CHANGE AND RISKS

Drivers of change

Equity of access, driven by the removal of the aqueduct and a growing population.

The removal of the aqueduct spans will eliminate current safety risks (associated with the deteriorating condition of the aqueduct) and enable access for watercraft.

Access to fisheries downstream i.e. the stocking of Estuary Perch by the Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA) will drive interest amongst recreational fishers to transit through this area.

There is also likely to be interest from the broader community to safely access the lower reach, particularly amongst those using unpowered craft (i.e. canoes and kayaks).

This aligns with the intent of *Kitjarra-dja-bul Bullarto langi-ut* masterplan (Barwon River Masterplan) and other user groups, e.g. recreational fishers; canoers and kayakers who wish to access more of the river.

Risks

There may be risks associated with multi-use activities e.g., water skiing and the transiting of other vessels, and water ski infrastructure located in the river (e.g. ski jumps and cables).

KEY STAKEHOLDER ISSUES

The importance of Goat Island and cultural and environmental sensitives associated with Porronggitj Karrong. Wadawurrung (WTOAC), Corangamite CMA and Barwon Water seek to ensure activities do not compromise the values of Porronggitj Karrong (as a quiet, tranquil place).

Recreational fishers, represented through VRFish and the VFA, have expressed an interest to access this area to transit to the lower reaches of the river. They have indicated that they can support a 5-knot speed restriction and promote low noise electric motors.

Other user groups want access to this part of the river e.g. canoers, kayakers and the general community.

Geelong Water Ski Club want to maintain exclusive access around their water ski infrastructure in the river. They have indicated that a multi-use zone around their water ski infrastructure is “dangerous” and not conducive to their current operation. They have limited interest in a temporary exclusion zone that would enable other functions at certain times.

Members of Geelong Water Ski Club have indicated that access immediately east of the aqueduct (currently part of the exclusion zone) is important to their operation. However, ski boats in this area are potentially at odds with the objectives of Porronggitj Karrong (as a quiet, tranquil place).

We have met jointly with the Geelong Water Ski Club and VRFish and the Victorian Fisheries Authority to directly hear their concerns, including an on-site meeting.

In response to this engagement and the issues raised above, the following changes to the waterway rules are proposed.

PROPOSED CHANGES

- **Move** the boundary of the area of the current exclusive use / special purposes zone used for water skiing to an area immediately adjoining existing water ski infrastructure in the river (*that being imaginary lines joining opposite banks of the river approximately 360 metres upstream (Map ref: [38°12'23.5"S 144°23'12.3"E](#)) and 540 metres (Map ref: [38°11'54.5"S 144°23'05.3"E](#)) downstream of where the centre line of Wilson's road intersects the eastern bank of the Barwon River.*

- **Allow** all vessels to transit the special purpose area so long as they keep to a 5-knot speed restriction and stay as close as is practicable to the western riverbank. This includes removing reference to 12kw of power and instead referring to the operating rules when transiting the area, i.e. do not exceed 5 knots unless engaged in water skiing”.
- **Add** a new 5 knot zone between Gundog Lane downstream past Goat Island to an imaginary line on opposite banks of the river where the southerly centre line of Dysons Court intersects the respective banks (Map ref: [38°11'34.2"S 144°22'33.6"E](#)) – consistent with the existing 5 knot zone between Coppards Road and the lower Breakwater. This will allow for recreational fishers wanting greater access to downstream fisheries. In line with the long-term objectives of *Kitjarra-dja-bul Bullarto langi-ut* masterplan (Barwon River Masterplan) and the broader environmental and cultural objectives associated with Porronggitj Karrong, this 5-knot zone is intended to be extended downstream to Boundary Road in 10 year’s time. This time will allow the Geelong Ski Club to transition to the new arrangements.
- **Add** the stretch of water north of Goat Island as an “area prohibited to vessels with engines”, recognising that the rules (or the Corangamite CMA) have no jurisdiction over access to the Island. The rules would facilitate this through restricting motorised vessels (with a 5-knot speed restriction) to the southern side of Goat Island, to discourage access to the Island and limit disturbance to the Porronggitj Karrong site. This would be supported with signage.
- **Allow** for a new 35 knot zone in the areas either side (upstream and downstream) of the amended exclusive use zone used for water skiing zone – up to the respective boundaries of the two 5 knot zones (imaginary lines intersecting Dysons Court (Map ref: [38°11'34.2"S 144°22'33.6"E](#)) and Coppards Road. The intent of this is to allow for continued water skiing in this area, as well as shared access by other users, recreational fishers, canoers, kayakers and the general community. In line with the long-term objectives of *Kitjarra-dja-bul Bullarto langi-ut* masterplan (Barwon River Masterplan) and the broader environmental and cultural objectives associated with Porronggitj Karrong, this 35-knot zone is intended to be reduced downstream to Boundary Road in 10 year’s time. This time will allow the Geelong Ski Club to transition to the new arrangements.
- **Amend** the language in the rules used to define location so they are more clearly understood. These areas will be labelled within a map that is publicly accessible.

BENEFICIARIES AND BENEFITS

Beneficiaries:

- The general public and other key user groups wanting increased and safe access to downstream reaches of the river, especially:
 - Recreational fishers wanting access to downstream fisheries.
 - Recreational canoers and kayakers
- Geelong Water Ski club members continue to benefit from exclusive access to their zone, reduced to the area immediately around their water ski infrastructure, as well as shared access to the new 35 knot zone.

Benefits:

- Increased **access** for the public and other user groups downstream of Gundog Lane
- Increased safety for all users (with adherence to a 5-knot speed restriction)
- Minimal disturbance to Goat Island and Porronggitj Karrong
- Addresses the core principles of safety and equity of access e.g:
 - More equitable access for the broader public, including recreational fishers, canoers and kayakers.
 - Safe access for all user groups.
 - In line with the City of Greater Geelong Health and Wellbeing Plan strategic action to: *increase easy access to parks, open spaces and public spaces with opportunities for physical activity where appropriate. Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019 – 2023.*
- The Geelong Water Ski Club can continue to operate with exclusive access for the zone immediately around their water ski infrastructure.
- Ensures greater consistency with the upstream shared 35 knot speed zone also used for water skiing.

MAP OF PROPOSED CHANGES

- A map highlighting the proposed changes to the Barwon River waterway rules for the southern reach is provided in Figure 3 below.

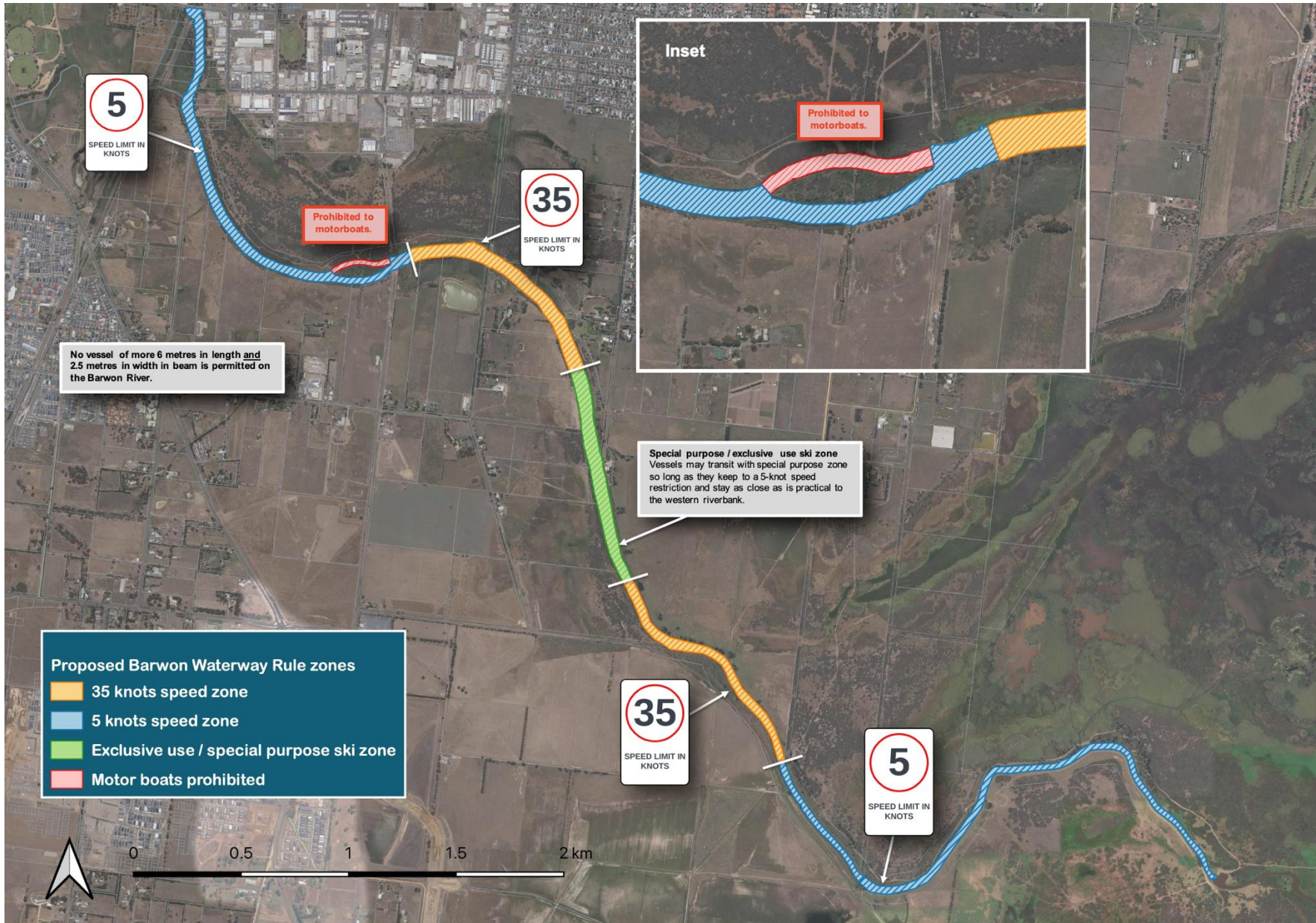


Figure 3: Proposed Barwon River waterway rules for the southern reach: Gundog Lane to the Lower Breakwater