



Public Comment Period ends 1st June 2015

Background

Queensland Government-owned corporation Ports North has proposed to dredge over 4.4 million cubic meters of dredge spoil from

the Trinity Inlet to make the Cairns shipping channel wider and deeper. This proposal is known as the 'Cairns Shipping Development Proposal'.

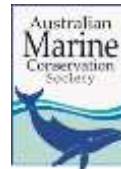
CAFNEC have many significant concerns about this ill-conceived, environmentally damaging and unnecessary proposal. For years we have been informing the community about our concerns and demonstrating community opposition to this project.

We were recently heartened by the announcement by the Queensland Government that they will not be funding this proposal and will rule out capital (new) dredge spoil dumping in the GBR World Heritage Area. This has been backed by a commitment by the Federal Government to rule out capital dredge spoil dumping in the GBR Marine Park.

Despite this the EIS has still been released. It is crucial that the Government backs its commitment to Reef and inshore marine and coastal environment protection by rejecting this proposal on environmental grounds, as well as financial grounds.

The EIS clearly demonstrates that this proposal in its current form is impractical and environmentally damaging. However if the EIS is approved with little community opposition, a change of Government or policy could see an environmental and economic disaster imposed on the Cairns and Far North environment and community.

Please take the time to formally register your opposition to this project. It really is important and you can make a difference. **Your voice of reason must be heard** above the 'develop at any cost' lobbyists who will also be having their say.



cafnecc.org.au

This guide has been produced by CAFNEC and is distributed in association with the Australian Marine Conservation Society.



Cairns and Far North residents turned out in force to the CAFNEC Marine Response Team Rally for the Reef to oppose dredging and support reef protection.

Key points you may wish to make:

- New capital dredging would have **negative impacts on the marine environment** due to increased suspended sediments, exposure of acid sulphate soils, underwater noise and many other impacts - regardless of where and how dredge spoil is disposed.
- Expanding the channel would lead to an **increased need for maintenance dredging** and spoil disposal – an impact that would occur every year, forever.
- **The justification for undertaking this project is weak** and mainly based around a false perception



Photo: Cairns Tourism and recreational craft travel through dredge spoil plume generated by channel dredging.

that port expansion is needed to allow growth in cruise ship tourism

visiting Cairns. Cairns is already host to an increasing number of cruise ships, those that are too large to enter the port anchor offshore and transfer passengers by tender – this is common practice in many cruise ship destinations around the world.

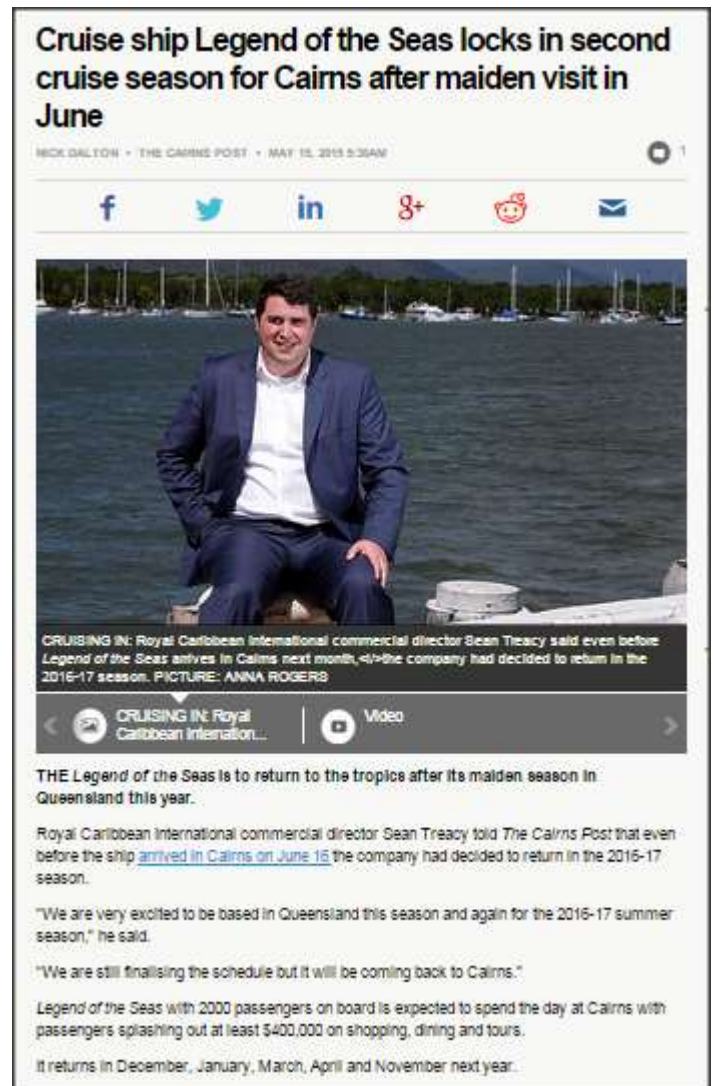
- **There is no genuine need for this project** and taxpayer’s money would be better spent on other ways to support our tourism and fisheries industries – ways that do not put the environment they rely on at risk. If this project is approved on environmental grounds it will send a message that Cairns and Queensland does not respect or look after its natural environment – with a consequent negative impact on tourism.
- The EIS puts forward two preferred options for dredge spoil disposal.
 - The first is to dump the spoil at sea impacting on local environments and decreasing the overall water quality of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. **Dumping dredge spoil at sea is an outdated practice and should be phased out, not expanded.** We note that new dredge spoil dumping in the Marine Park has been ruled out by State and Federal Governments, with good reason.
 - The second preferred option is to dump the acid sulphate contaminated spoil on the sensitive wetlands of East Trinity. This area is a Wetland of national importance, a conservation reserve, an Indigenous Protected Area and adjoins an identified fish



Photo: A full house attended the CAFNEC Community Forum on Cairns Port Dredging to hear from scientists, industry and environmental experts.

habitat area and significant seagrass beds. It is unsuitable as a location for capital dredge spoil dumping. We agree with the statement in the EIS that "...[East Trinity] is not considered appropriate based on a lack of long term planning intent for development of the land, its environmental zoning status, prospective impacts to cultural heritage and native title, the potentially high likelihood, severity and uncertainty associated with environmental impacts, human health and safety considerations and cost proportionality. We agree with the EIS statement that **"the conclusion is that placement of dredge material at the East Trinity site is inappropriate"**

- **There are alternatives to the proposal** that can be explored including better facilitation of cruise passenger transport ashore, an action that has already been initiated with the upgrade to the passenger receiving area at Yorkey's Knob.
- Having seen the outcomes of the Gladstone dredging project which included major fish kills and human health impacts we have little faith in the ability of the proponent to manage impacts. **We question modelling and other EIS contents that dismiss the clear environmental risks as 'not significant' or 'manageable'**. Neither do we accept the premise of arguments in the EIS that because the bay is already turbid (muddy) that the acknowledged increased turbidity from dredging would not have an impact.
- **We conclude that the proposal in its current form is unacceptable on environmental grounds** and that this conclusion is supported by the EIS documentation. We call on the Queensland and Federal Governments to back their commitments to environmental protection and improving water quality coming from Great Barrier Reef catchments and **reject this proposal on environmental grounds.**



Picture: Screen shot of one of many Cairns Post articles about current and ongoing increases in cruise ship visitation to Cairns, which is not reliant on shipping channel expansion.

How to have your say

When making your comment on the EIS be sure to include your name, address and email address. Make it clear that this is your formal comment on the “Draft environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Cairns Shipping Development Project”.

Making your own individual submission will have the maximum impact – your voice is important, say what you want to say in your own words. If you are unable to do this we have also provided a pro forma letter overleaf which you can send via post, email or using our easy auto email tool (see cafneq.org.au).

Read the EIS at: <http://www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/assessments-and-approvals/projects-draft-environmental-impact-statement-documents.html>

(don't be daunted by the many chapters, the critical parts are the executive summary and any sections of particular interest to you)

Send your submission to one of the following:

Email: CairnsSDP@coordinatorgeneral.qld.gov.au

Post: EIS project manager – Cairns Shipping Development project
Coordinated Project Delivery Division
Office of the Coordinator-General
PO Box 15517
City East, Qld, 4002, Australia

Online form: <https://haveyoursay.dsdip.qld.gov.au/coordinatorgeneral/cairnssdp/consultation/intro/view>



Photos taken during maintenance dredging (left) and dumping (right) operations in Cairns in 2014. Dredging methods used for maintenance dredging are the same as those proposed for capital (new) dredging in the EIS © Josh Coates /Xanthe Rivett / CANEC / WWF.

Quotes from The EIS technical report chapter B5 - Key Findings relevant to Marine Water Quality : Based on modelling the EIS states that in a dredge spoil dumping ‘worst case scenario’ that “plumes would be detectable with instrumentation **but may not be visible to the naked eye**” and goes on to conclude that “only minor impacts to water quality are predicted from dredging of the inner port and outer channel and the material placement at the DMPA.”

We question the modelling, and the conclusions.

EIS project manager – Cairns Shipping Development project
Coordinated Project Delivery Division
Office of the Coordinator-General
PO Box 15517
City East, Qld, 4002, Australia
CairnsSDP@coordinatorgeneral.qld.gov.au

Re: Formal submission regarding the draft environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Cairns Shipping Development Project

Dear Coordinator General, State and Federal Government,

I am just one person who cares about our marine and coastal environment and the tourism, fisheries and community benefits that rely on a healthy environment. However I represent many more people in my community who have not found the time to write to you but care just as much as I do, and do not want to see this proposal approved.

We are heartened by the Queensland government's statement that they will not fund this proposal but disturbed that this EIS process is proceeding. We do not want to see this project given environmental approval as under future Governments this ill-conceived and environmentally damaging proposal could still proceed.

New capital dredging in Cairns would have negative impacts on the marine environment due to increased suspended sediments, exposure of acid sulphate soils, underwater noise and many other impacts - regardless of where and how dredge spoil is disposed.

Expanding the channel would lead to an increased need for maintenance dredging and spoil disposal – an impact that would occur every year, forever.

The justification for undertaking this project is weak and mainly based around a false perception that port expansion is needed to allow growth in cruise ship tourism visiting Cairns. Cairns is already host to an increasing number of cruise ships, those that are too large to enter the port anchor offshore and transfer passengers by tender – this is common practice in many cruise ship destinations around the world.

There is no genuine need for this project and taxpayer's money would be better spent on other ways to support our tourism and fisheries industries – ways that do not put the environment they rely on at risk. If this project is approved on environmental grounds it will send a message that Cairns and Queensland does not respect or look after its natural environment – with a consequent negative impact on tourism.

There are alternatives to the proposal that can be explored including better facilitation of cruise passenger transport ashore, an action that has already been initiated with the upgrade to the passenger receiving area at Yorkey's Knob.

Having seen the outcomes of the Gladstone dredging project which included major fish kills and human health impacts we have little faith in the ability of the proponent to manage impacts. We question modelling and other EIS contents that dismiss the clear environmental risks as 'not significant' or 'manageable'. Neither do we accept the premise of arguments in the EIS that because the bay is already turbid (muddy) that the acknowledged increased turbidity from dredging would not have an impact.

The EIS identifies two preferred options for dredge spoil disposal:

- The first is to dump the spoil at sea impacting on local environments and decreasing the overall water quality of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. Dumping dredge spoil at sea is an outdated practice and should be phased out, not expanded. We note that new dredge spoil dumping in the Marine Park has been ruled out by State and Federal Governments, with good reason.
- The second preferred option is to dump the acid sulphate contaminated spoil on the sensitive wetlands of East Trinity. This area is a Wetland of national importance, a conservation reserve and Indigenous Protected Area and adjoins an identified fish habitat area and significant seagrass beds. It is unsuitable as a location for capital dredge spoil dumping. We agree with the statement in the EIS that “[East Trinity] is not considered appropriate based on a lack of long term planning intent for development of the land, its environmental zoning status, prospective impacts to cultural heritage and native title, the potentially high likelihood, severity and uncertainty associated with environmental impacts, human health and safety considerations and cost proportionality. We agree with the EIS statement that **"the conclusion is that placement of dredge material at the East Trinity site is inappropriate"**

As such we conclude that the proposal in its current form is unacceptable on environmental grounds and that this conclusion is supported by the EIS documentation. We call on the Queensland and Federal Governments to back their commitments to environmental protection and improving water quality coming from Great Barrier Reef catchments and reject this proposal on environmental grounds.

Yours Sincerely,

Name:

Address:

Email address: