

15 April 2013

Committee Secretary

Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communication
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir

**Re: Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment
(Great Barrier Reef) Bill 2013 - Inquiry**

There's been a significant shift in the way the QLD Government intends to deal with coastal development and it's responsibilities regarding areas of high ecological significance. The QLD Premier, The Hon Campbell Newman and his colleague, the Hon Jeff Seeney have produced draft legislation that will supercede existing coastal development legislation. **The draft QLD legislation seeks to avoid responsibilities for endangered species and areas of high ecological significance through Section 10 and specifically S10 (d).** This "interim" legislation is very significant to the welfare of the marine creatures in the Fitzroy Delta, Keppel Bay and the Great Barrier Reef generally.

From the "Draft Coastal Protection State Planning Regulatory Provision – Protecting the Coastal Environment" :

"Areas of high ecological significance

- (10) Development and development infrastructure is to be located outside of, and not have a significant impact on, an area of high ecological significance in any coastal management district, unless the development or development infrastructure is for a purpose specified below:
- (a) urban or rural residential purposes within an urban area
 - (b) development for tourism purposes
 - (c) any purpose within a maritime development area or aquaculture development area
 - (d) development associated with a port or airport**
 - (e) low impact tidal water intake or discharge infrastructure for aquaculture development on land
 - (f) minor public marine development and associated pedestrian and vehicle access facilities, or
 - (g) extraction purposes within a key resource area. "

This proposed legislation provides for an unacceptably broad range of permissible coastal development. The "develop at any cost" mentality of State Governments, particularly the current QLD Government, must be countered by Federal Government assessments made in the long term national and global interest. The Federal Government must not allow state governments a greater role in the coastal development approval process. GBRMPA should be given a much more authoritative role in the Federal Government assessment of proposed development in coastal and marine environments.

The proposed coal port / industrialisation of the Fitzroy Delta and Curtis Island is an exercise in “empire building” by the Gladstone Ports Corp – but at what long-term cost to the marine creatures that live in the delta, the adjacent Barrier Reef and the human communities living, working and playing nearby.

As a background I visited Quartz Rock early in August 2012. Quartz Rock is approx 11.4km SW from Peak Island and the surrounding Peak Island reserve (turtle nesting habitat) and 15km approx NW from Sea Hill at the northern end of Curtis Island. There are a number of outerlying, smaller rock formations around the exposed Quartz Rock. While I was there I was surprised by the large number of turtles, > 30 I could see on the surface around these rocky areas. The turtles were continually surfacing and submerging so additional numbers were underwater and not visible. The size of the heads of a significant number of the turtles when they surfaced were approx 300mm+ in vertical section - there were some very big, ancient turtles foraging there that day. There was a strong cold current from the south, water clarity was high, no surface baitfish activity.

My concern is that if such large, ancient creatures can be so prolific at 11.4km away from Peak Island, what sort of numbers are present at Peak Island and adjacent habitats particularly during nesting activity.

Prop and boat strike, surface and sub surface noise, light pollution from shipping and fixed port installations, pollutants, debris and coal dust from shipping / port facilities plus the loss of food sources due to silt / turbidity / acid sulphate dispersal from dredging - the effects will be catastrophic on the turtle population. Peak Island is directly downwind / downstream from the proposed holding area for shipping and the port facility in general. The prevailing winds and currents will carry high concentrations of shipping, port and dredging pollution directly through the Peak Island reserve and high value surrounding environs such as the Quartz Rock area. Turtles of large breeding body mass are at significant risk of being impacted by ship propellers rather than being swept aside as with small, minimal inertia objects in the water.

The existing Peak Island turtle nesting reserve and adjacent turtle habitat including rocky outcrops such as the Quartz Rock environs and others are high value environments for the predominant 4 turtle species that frequent this area - the Green, Flatback, Hawksbill and Loggerhead. A massive volume of information regarding these species is here :

<http://www.ehp.qld.gov.au/wildlife/watching/turtles/publications.html>

We are the current custodians of this land and its lifeforms. What will future generations say of us if short-term commercial profits are allowed to continually outweigh the permanent loss of unique habitat and species. The proposed industrial development of the Fitzroy Delta and Curtis Island has no redeeming qualities whatsoever. The Fitzroy Delta, the northern half of Curtis Island including The Narrows and tidal environs to the west should have absolutely no industrial or commercial development from that which currently exists – **permanently**. Existing port development programs in Gladstone Harbour and generally to the west of Curtis Island must be prevented from impacting on any existing or future preserved areas.

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