

From: [Jenny](#)
To: [Committee, EC \(SEN\)](#)
Subject: Submission to Senate Inquiry into the adequacy of the Australian and Queensland Governments' efforts to stop the rapid decline of the Great Barrier Reef
Date: Saturday, 31 May 2014 2:13:00 PM

The Great Barrier Reef is an internationally renowned biodiversity icon and is the seventh natural wonder of the world. It has already lost 50% of its coral cover in the last 27 years and experts warn it could halve again in the next 10 years. Our Reef is threatened by climate change, land-based pollution and the crown of thorns invasive starfish.

An already fragile GBR cannot sustain another threat from five new or expanded coal and gas ports, which require unprecedented amounts of dredging and dumping i.e. 5 million tonnes of sediment from the seabed to deepen the port. The Reef is not a suitable coal and gas shipping highway and a general rubbish tip for dredge spoil. Marine scientists agree that suspended sediment spreads for kilometres in plumes no matter where it is dumped.

The Reef adds \$6 billion to our economy each year through tourism and fisheries, and more than 63,000 sustainable jobs in Queensland's coastal communities. Industrialising the Reef will inevitably jeopardise the amenity, livelihoods and fresh seafood supply of many.

Another serious impact of Queensland's coal mining and coal seam gas operations rapidly industrialising Queensland's farmlands is that agricultural run off, via inland waterways into the Reef waters, has inevitably become even more highly contaminated.

Protecting the Reef is good for the economy. Protecting the Reef is good for the jobs that won't disappear when the mining boom does. Protecting the reef is good for regional communities, for future generations and for our unique marine life.

The World Heritage Committee has expressed its "extreme concern" about our treatment of the Reef, and given us one year to improve, or the Reef will end up on the "World Heritage in Danger" list. This would be an international embarrassment and a huge blow to our tourism industry.

This link is to the recent report from UNESCO who appear hesitant about Abbot Point port expansion and Greg Hunt's plans to improve the water quality by 150%. FROM UNESCO: "The proposed dumping of dredged material from the proposed Abbot Point development is also noted with concern. Indeed, this was approved, despite an indication that less impacting disposal alternatives may exist. It is considered that the suggested achievement of a 150% net benefit on water quality from compensation for the consented dredge disposal appears inappropriate without a specific timescale for its rapid and guaranteed achievement prior to development proceeding, and a clear indication of the implications for progress on water quality against the Reef Plan targets, in addition to the uncertainty about the impacts of dredge material plumes beyond the disposal site. This is of particular concern given evidence suggesting that the inshore reefs in the southern two-thirds of the

property are not recovering from disturbances over the past few decades." This is the link to read the entire thread <http://whc.unesco.org/en/soc/2867>

Please take on board as part of my submission, Senate Committee, the following article "Dumping spoil from Australian port expansion projects into the Coral Sea will do serious damage to the Great Barrier Reef" by Jon Brodie.
<http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg22229704.700-dredgeanddump-will-damage-the-great-barrier-reef.html>

Jon Brodie is the chief research scientist at the Centre for Tropical Water & Aquatic Ecosystem Research at James Cook University in Townsville, Australia. A more detailed and fully referenced version of this article is published in the journal [*Estuarine, Coastal and Shelf Science* \(vol 142, p 1\)](#)

Sincerely
Jenny Chester