

19<sup>th</sup> February 2022

## **Submission to the Inquiry on the Douglas Shoal Environmental Remediation**

**Dear Inquiry.**

I support the plan of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority for the environmental remediation of the Douglas Shoal. Since there was damage caused to the reef, it is important to undertake necessary work to restore it. It is also a good step to combine science with traditional knowledge in how to take care of our marine areas, which will help contribute to a more effective and holistic restoration effort (Bell 2019).

Damage was done to the Douglas Shoal from the grounding of the coal ship Sheng Neng 1 in 2010. The damage from the ship included leaking oil, leaking paint and other hazardous materials, and causing a massive physical gash into the coral from where they ran aground. This caused serious physical damage to the reef (Huang 2010). As an aside, there is an irony in the damage to the reef being caused by a coal ship. The reliance on coal and other fossil fuels is a major contributor to carbon emissions causing climate change. Climate change will exacerbate pressures on the reef, such as periodic warming and bleaching events, to become more common and more serious. This poses a serious and even existential threat to the Great Barrier Reef and other coral systems around the world, which would be a lamentable loss of biodiversity and natural beauty - as well as a significant cultural and economic icon in Queensland.

Given the serious damage caused by the Sheng Neng 1, made more morally outrageous from their negligence and taking a shortcut through the protected maritime territory, it is entirely appropriate that they were held responsible for costs. This includes some \$35 million gained for the Douglas Shoal Remediation Project from an out-of-court settlement with the ship. Though this may not meet the full costs of what is necessary to restore the Douglas Shoal, estimated at some \$120 million (Moody 2016).

As an aside, I note that the first mate and ship's master of the Shen Neng 1 were both convicted

for their roles in causing damage to the reef (Moody 2016; Moore 2014). This emphasises their accountability in causing severe environmental damage, though the punishments (3 months served and a \$25,000 fine respectively) would indicate that we do not take extreme damage to our environment as seriously as we should.

While it is taken a few years for the restoration work to start up, I have hope that the remediation project can restore the reef to the health and biodiversity that it enjoyed before the damage. And, indeed, that this project will help us to learn about reef management and restoration, which we can use to better protect the Great Barrier Reef and other coral reefs around the world into the future.

Kind Regards,

Benjamin Cronshaw.

## References

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