

Research Director  
Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Sir/Madam,

***Sustainable Ports Development Bill 2015***

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Committee on this Bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission. I, Tony Fontes, am making this submission on behalf of the Environment Council of Central Queensland (ECOCEQ). I am the Campaign Organiser for ECOCEQ and am authorised to make this submission on behalf of ECOCEQ. We are most concerned about the future health of the Great Barrier Reef. Currently, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority identifies the southern half of the reef (Cooktown south) as in poor health. Land use practices and coastal development, including port development, have had significant impacts over time. It is time to address these impacts.

The Sustainable Ports Development Bill 2015 is a good start in implementing better regulation to protect our Great Barrier Reef. The Bill provides clear rules restricting port-related dredging, dumping and port expansion along the Great Barrier Reef coastline. This includes prohibiting sea dumping of capital dredge spoil from port development; limiting capital dredging to the priority ports; and limiting port expansion to the 12 existing port areas. However, significant further action needs to be taken to protect the reef and meet the commitments made in the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan. These restrictions will reduce water pollution and protect most greenfield areas of the coast from port development, which will make a big difference for the future of the World Heritage Area and the jobs and communities that rely on it.

The following key issues pertaining to ports, dredging and dumping ought to be included in this Bill:

**1. Implement the commitment to ban transshipping in the GBR Marine Park (GBRMP) by prohibiting onshore development which facilitates such operations.**

Transshipping is the vessel-to-vessel transfer of bulk commodities like coal or bauxite. The Bill does not ban transshipping in the GBRMP, a clear election promise of the ALP. The Wongai Project on Cape York, which involves transshipping in the GBRMP, can still go ahead under the transitional provisions of this Bill. The joint Queensland-Commonwealth Reef Ministerial Council must cooperate to align state and federal laws to prevent transshipping in the GBRMP.

**2. Fully implement the commitment to ban offshore dumping of dredge spoil.**

The Bill bans sea disposal of dredge spoil from *port-related* capital dredging. This does not match the regulations provided by the Commonwealth Government which ban offshore dumping of *all* capital dredge material, with an exemption of up to 15,000m<sup>3</sup> for small projects such as boat ramps.

**3. Address how the impacts of maintenance dredging are to be managed.**

This Bill does not provide a framework for reducing the impacts of dredging to maintain existing shipping channels. An average of almost 1 million cubic metres of waste material from maintenance dredging is dumped in the Reef's World Heritage waters each year. The government should adopt an annual cap and other measures to reduce sea-disposal of maintenance dredge spoil.

**4. Restrict non-port related development, including non-port related dredging or dumping.**

Non-port activities can be substantial, such as the Shute Harbour marina proposal for 500,000m<sup>3</sup> of dredging, and should be included in the Queensland Government's promise to limit capital dredging and ban sea dumping in the GBR World Heritage Area. If these activities won't be addressed in this Bill, the Queensland Government should specify the timeframe and method for implementing appropriate restrictions on non-port related development, dredging and dumping of dredge material.

**5. Implement the commitment to ensure full protection of the Greater Fitzroy Delta**

The Queensland Government has committed to protecting the Greater Fitzroy Delta, one of the largest unspoilt wetlands remaining on the Reef Coast. The Bill should provide specific provisions to restrict port development in Port Alma to not allow an expansion of the existing port facilities for new activities beyond its current uses.

To uphold community expectations of accountability and transparency, this Bill needs amendments to ensure that third party enforcement and judicial review are available for all decision making referred to in this Bill. It should be mandatory that all documents informing these decisions are kept on the public register, particularly the documents informing a master plan review which allow understanding of the success of the priority management measures in managing environmental impacts.

Yours sincerely,



Tony Fontes  
Environment Council of Central Queensland