



Submission no 025

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Cairns and Far North Environment Centre Inc.

PO Box 323N, CAIRNS QLD 4870

T: (07) 4032 1746 F: (07) 4053 3779

E: director@cafnecc.org.au www.cafnecc.org.au

30/06/2015

Research Director
Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000
By email to: ipnrc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Sustainable Ports Development Bill 2015

About CAFNEC

The Cairns and Far North Environment Centre (CAFNEC) is the peak environment organisation for the region from Cardwell north to Torres Strait and from the coast west to the Gulf of Carpentaria. CAFNEC is a non-profit, community organisation that has been operating for over 30 years with the aim of encouraging the community to value, protect and restore the natural environment.

Introduction

CAFNEC has had a long and active interest in ports management in Queensland and in particular the Far North. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Bill. We have a strong interest in the impact of ports and associated shipping on the marine and coastal environment including the Great Barrier Reef. In recent years we have had a strong focus on the impact of port activities, including dredging, on the environment. Proposed capital dredging and offshore dumping in Cairns port and the Wongai transshipping proposal are of particular concern to us. We are pleased that this bill goes a long way to addressing the port capital dredging issues, but are concerned that the issue of transshipping and the issues of maintenance and non-port (e.g. marina) dredging are not properly addressed and we recommend improvements in these areas as a priority.

We commend the Government on the introduction of the Bill and the fulfilment of the election promises that the Bill will represent, noting that the Bill does fail to implement some important election promises as outlined above and below.

Specific comment on the Sustainable Ports Development Bill 2015

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:

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.

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 15,000m³ for small projects such as boat ramps.

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 and better manage onshore disposal location and management.

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 500,000m³ 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.

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.



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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,

Josh Coates, Director, on behalf of the Cairns and Far North Environment Centre Inc.

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