



QUEENSLAND
TOURISM INDUSTRY
COUNCIL

The Voice of Tourism

**Submission to the
Infrastructure,
Planning and Natural
Resources Committee
on the
Sustainable Ports
Development Bill
2015**

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Introduction

The Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources committee on the Sustainable Ports Development Bill 2015. QTIC strongly supports the government in its efforts, through this bill, to provide protection of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (GBRWHA) through the effective management of port-related development in and adjacent to the area.

Tourism in Queensland

Tourism is a key economic driver in many Queensland regions, supporting regional employment and community growth, employing over 241,000 people directly and indirectly, or 9.9% of all people employed in Queensland.¹ This is substantially more than the mining sector (79,000 direct jobs) or even agriculture, forestry and fishing combined (56,900 direct jobs)². The tourism industry in Queensland contributed \$23 billion to Queensland's Gross State Product (GSP), representing 7.9% of total GSP and generated \$5.9 billion in exports in 2013, making it the second largest export earner behind coal³.

Queensland Tourism Industry Council

QTIC is the State peak body for tourism in Queensland. The voice of tourism, QTIC represents the interests of the tourism industry, including business operators, Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs) and sector associations.

A private sector, membership-based tourism industry organisation; all of Queensland's 13 RTOs are members of QTIC as are 20 of the industry sector associations and in excess of 3,000 regional members, operating in all sectors of the tourism industry. QTIC works in partnership with government agencies and industry bodies at a local, state and national level (National Tourism Alliance), to strengthen the voice of tourism in all relevant policy forums.

QTIC remains committed to working with governments and industry through the following national and state strategies and working groups:

- Australian Government, Tourism 2020, Tourism Industry Potential
- Labour and Skills Working Group
- Queensland Government, DestinationQ Industry Partnership Agreement and 12 Month Action Plan

Recommendations

1. Tourism should be a core concern in GBRWHA and port related policy development.

QTIC affirms its strong position that the interests of the tourism industry and its relationship with nature conservation must remain as a priority alongside other public interests in regard to the

¹ Tourism Research Australia, Tourism Key Economic Facts December 2013

² ibid

³ Tourism Queensland, Tourism Economic Key Fact December 2010

management and protection of the GBRWHA. This includes the Master Plans for the outlined ports of Abbott Point, Townsville, Mackay/Hay Point, Gladstone and any other strategic coastal use and development plans.

Tourism is a long-term, sustainable economic driver for Queensland and its 55,700 tourism businesses remain heavily reliant on the state's natural assets for their competitiveness. Australia's \$107bn tourism industry is internationally renowned for its ecological diversity, with the GBR almost certainly the most prominent valuable asset. This was highlighted by the enormous public interest generated by the recent UNESCO World Heritage Committee decision.

Tourism activity associated with the GBR contributes \$5.7 billion dollars to the national economy annually. Such success can be largely attributed to the effective tourism planning and management processes in place, which have resulted in a successful balance between reasonable human use and the preservation of this world-class natural asset. However, increased pressure on the GBR, some incompatible activity, as well as other factors such as climate change, are having a significant impact on the health of the GBR.

In its Outlook Report of 2014, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority stated that:

"The Great Barrier Reef is an icon under pressure. Everyone's actions, whether big or small, to reduce threats and help restore its condition will improve its outlook. Combined, they will make the Reef more able to recover from the legacy of past actions and better able to withstand those predicted to threaten its future."

The Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2014 and the Great Barrier Reef Region Strategic Assessment Report⁴ recognise the challenges to the ecosystem which must be addressed by Governments to protect the GBR Marine Park. As a response, the Australian Government proposal to ban the disposal of capital dredge material is a positive step in providing certainty for proponents, industry and community on the long-term environmental protection of the GBR.

2. QTIC strongly supports the Governments ambition to protect the GBRWHA. QTIC supports the legislative efforts to ensure the beneficial reuse of port-related capital dredged material.

QTIC is pleased the Government has acted upon Action WQA7 of the Reef 2050 Long Term Sustainability Plan for a "planning process that prioritises opportunities for the beneficial re-use of dredged material, taking into account national and international requirements and guidelines for the disposal of dredge material".

Major direct impacts of sea disposal of dredge material include the burial or smothering of plants and animals on the seafloor, degradation of water quality, and loss and modification of habitats. There is also emerging evidence of a higher prevalence of coral disease in areas exposed to dredge material. Dredge material has the potential to migrate over greater distances and for longer periods than previously understood (more than 100 kilometres). The consequential impacts of ports are also linked to those associated with shipping and ship anchorages⁵

⁴ Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority 2014, Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2014, GBRMPA, Townsville. <http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/managing-the-reef/great-barrier-reef-outlook-report>

⁵ Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority 2014, Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2014, GBRMPA, Townsville. <http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/managing-the-reef/great-barrier-reef-outlook-report>

This bill by Government to dispose of dredge spoil onshore as opposed to within the Great Barrier Marine Park is a prime example of this action being appropriately implemented. QTIC commends the government on this move and would encourage further similar actions to protect and enhance the water quality and the Outstanding Universal Values (OUY) of the Great Barrier Reef.

The corresponding land adjacent to the GBRWHA also provides the people of Queensland and the tourism industry a whole range of environmental assets which require the adequate legislative management of onshore soil disposal. QTIC supports the inclusion of Clause 34 to this bill that ensures an approval for the disposal of prescribed dredge material can only be given if the material can be beneficially reused, or if it is impracticable to beneficially reuse it, where it can be used on land, other than on tidal land, in a way that is consistent with the principles of ecologically sustainable development (as set out in the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cwlth), section 3A).

However, the regulation does not cover the disposal of maintenance dredge spoil material as GBRMPA has referred this action to the master planning processes proposed under the Queensland Government's Ports Strategy.

QTIC recognizes the Queensland Ports Strategy proposes the establishment of Priority Port Development Areas (PPDAs) that constitutes the development of existing ports as opposed to the creation of entirely new ports, which is supported in that context. However, with the spatial boundaries for each PPDA not yet determined, the potential cumulative impact of dredge activities that could be deemed 'maintenance' works is of particular concern. These PPDAs can potentially dispose large amounts of maintenance dredge spoil into the Marine Park over the coming decades.

To ensure alignment occurs between the Australian and Queensland Governments, the definition of capital and maintenance dredge works in relation to Priority Port Development Areas (PPDAs) and the Queensland Ports Strategy requires clarification as part of this proposal.

3. Exclusion of tourism and recreational facilities from the definition of port facilities.

QTIC supports the exclusion of small-scale tourism and recreational facilities from the definition of port facilities thereby ensuring that the wonder and spectacle that is the GBRWHA can be accessible and enjoyed by all and the states 55,000 tourism businesses, many of them who operate in or near the GBRWHA, can continue to grow sustainably.

FURTHER ENQUIRIES

We welcome the opportunity for further discussion regarding the points raised in this submission. For all enquiries, please contact QTIC Policy Team [REDACTED]