




Speech By
Craig Crawford

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

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SUSTAINABLE PORTS DEVELOPMENT BILL

 **Mr CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (5.49 pm): I rise tonight to speak in support of the Sustainable Ports Development Bill 2015. The port of Cairns makes an important contribution to the economy of Far North Queensland, supporting a variety of industries including defence, tourism and fishing, and it is an important gateway for bulk and general cargo, including petroleum, sugar and fertiliser. Some sectors of the Far North Queensland region have called for Cairns to be designated a priority port. The government has considered this and correctly decided that we will not divert from the elements of the bill which form part of our Reef 2050 Plan.

Amendments to the bill to allow capital dredging within the inner harbour of the port of Cairns will give it flexibility to respond to commercially viable development opportunities in the future as they arise, without posing a risk to the Great Barrier Reef. The government consulted with stakeholders on the proposal to amend the bill, which has the general support of stakeholders including Ports North and environmental groups. I have spoken with a number of those environmental groups, Ports North as well as the business community in Cairns a number of times over recent months. These amendments will mean that the Cairns military marine industry can compete for contracts like the multimillion dollar Pacific Patrol Boat Replacement Project currently up for tender by the Department of Defence. The port of Cairns will be subject to the prohibition on sea based disposal, and each complying project application would be subject to assessment under relevant legislation and, if approved, subject to the appropriate conditions.

Constraints placed around dredging at the port, including volumetric limits, confirm the general agreement that the port of Cairns will not become a major bulk port. It is vital that the port of Cairns be recognised for the significance that it has. Visit there and you will see a unique and diverse port, with a heavy emphasis placed on tourism related reef boats and ferries, but behind the reef fleet terminal and the cafes and boardwalks are a myriad of small, medium and large port businesses which operate without fanfare and often out of sight of the general public. These businesses include HMAS *Cairns*, a thriving Navy base, a thriving commercial fishing precinct and, importantly, a very busy commercial precinct whereby small to medium ships are constructed, maintained and overhauled. To be absolutely clear, the government is supportive of the Cairns Shipping Development Project and therefore has allowed it to continue under the transitional arrangements under the bill.

The key to the port of Cairns is achieving the balance of meeting our needs towards the Great Barrier Reef on the one hand—our lifeline of tourism injection in Cairns—and the need to maintain a port that services Far North Queensland, Papua New Guinea and the Pacific Islands, with the barge services, the defence and the maintenance weighed up on the other hand. The government's proposal to review these provisions after four years demonstrates this government's commitment to ensuring those provisions are achieving a balance between economic development and the protection of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area.

These amendments will not impact on the ability of the port of Cairns to proceed with its environmental impact statement for the proposed Cairns Shipping Development Project. However, consistent with the government's commitment to ban the sea based disposal of port related capital dredge spoil in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area, dredged material from the project must be disposed of on land or beneficially reused. This is a discussion that we need to have but not today, not as part of this bill. The Cairns Shipping Development Project needs to be analysed separate to the Sustainable Ports Development Bill. It is an important discussion, a sensitive and divided conversation that Cairns will need to have.

I want to thank the minister and his staff for the work that has gone on behind the scenes over many months. There has been extensive consultation in Cairns throughout the business community as well as the environmental protection community. The amendments meet the needs for Cairns and provide for a vibrant and successful future at an important port in Far North Queensland. I commend the bill.