

Question on Notice

No. 241

Asked on Wednesday, 27 February 2019

MR M BERKMAN ASKED THE MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND THE GREAT BARRIER REEF, MINISTER FOR SCIENCE AND MINISTER FOR THE ARTS (HON L ENOCH)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the Guardian article on 1 February 2019 regarding correspondence from the then Director-General of the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection in August 2016 to the Secretary of the Federal Environment and Energy department and Walker Corporation's proposal for apartments and a marina on Toondah harbour in Moreton Bay—

Will the Minister advise (a) the basis of the reported assessment that changes to the boundary of the RAMSAR wetland were in 'the urgent national interest' and (b) what response to this correspondence, if any, has been received?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for the question.

- (a) The former Director-General of the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection wrote to the Secretary of the Commonwealth Department of Environment and Energy in August 2016. In this letter, he outlined that the Queensland Government's support for Toondah Harbour was contingent upon a rigorous assessment of environmental impacts by both the Commonwealth and Queensland governments, and compliance with all necessary and appropriate environmental requirements and controls.

In this letter, the former Director-General suggested that it was, in his opinion, in the national interest to revitalise Toondah Harbour in an environmentally sensitive manner to ensure that North Stradbroke Island transitions into a resilient ecotourism-based future community within a sensitive marine environment.

The former Director-General indicated that a review of the boundaries may be necessary given they were drawn close to 30 years ago. The former Director-General was clear that if any changes were made to the Ramsar boundaries as part of a development application, such a change should provide a net gain in both size and environmental quality for the Ramsar site. However, a subsequent comprehensive mapping review, which included consultation with other Queensland Government departments and local governments, concluded that there was no justification to amend the Ramsar boundary.

- (b) The Deputy Secretary of the Commonwealth Department of Environment and Energy responded on 24 October 2016, noting the matters raised in the former Director-General's letter and explained that the Commonwealth Government will consider the Toondah Harbour proposal carefully in accordance with the requirements of the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.