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26 February 2013

MEDIA RELEASE

NQCC queries CIA report

North Queensland Conservation Council today raised several questions about the Cumulative Impact Assessment undertaken by the mining companies planning to build coal export facilities at Abbot Point along with North Queensland Bulk Ports.

NQCC Coordinator Wendy Tubman said “cumulative impacts have been defined by the Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining at the University of Queensland as ‘the successive, incremental and combined impacts (both positive and negative) of an activity on society, the economy and the environment’. But the report pays scant attention to interactions between impacts – despite the fact that such interactions often mean that the sum of impacts is greater than the parts.

“Furthermore, the assessment appears to be working off the wrong base, looking at how much the *current* situation will be affected by the projects, without identifying how bad the current situation is now compared with what it was when the area was listed as World Heritage in 1981.

“Under the EPBC Act cumulative impacts include ‘impacts which are facilitated, to a large extent, by [an] action’. But while the sole purpose of these projects is to facilitate the export of coal, the impact of burning that coal on climate change, the greatest threat to the Great Barrier Reef, is not considered” she said.

“The report resembles a black box – lots of data from individual studies have been put in – but there is little or no indication of how these studies were used to come up with the conclusions about cumulative impacts.

“The reader is left with the impression that all and every development can be ‘managed’, with the suggestion that development could go on indefinitely with no real impact. That is patently nonsensical; at some stage the environment would just fall over.

“Overall, the results are counter-intuitive” Tubman said. “The projects assessed are planned to increase the output of coal from Abbot Point from just 13.6 million tonnes in 2011/12 to a massive 240 million tonnes, yet the report concludes that ‘it is unlikely that the marine environment and marine fauna species will be significantly impacted by the Abbot Point Project’. I don’t think I would be alone in finding this hard to accept.”

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