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MEDIA RELEASE

6 June 2014

Government ignores community concern in promoting Townsville port expansion

‘The people of Townsville have every reason to feel betrayed by the release of the Queensland Port Strategy yesterday’, said NQCC Coordinator Wendy Tubman.

‘The Strategy identifies Townsville port as one of five Priority Port Development Areas in Queensland, yet we are only part-way through a public assessment of a proposal for a major expansion.

‘While the Strategy offers a passing nod to the completion of the EIS process, there can be little doubt that the State government has already decided the outcome’, Ms Tubman said.

‘They are dead set on approving the expansion of the port, regardless. They regard it as a done deal.

‘The Strategy describes the port’s ‘outlook for the future’ [sic] as ‘strong’ with trade volumes ‘expected to increase substantially in the next twenty years’. The current proposed expansion was based on major coal exports, a doubling of nickel output from Yabulu and the introduction of magnetite as a major export product. None of these are looking likely and demand for port facilities is just not there. The supposed need for the expansion is as flaky as ever’, said Ms Tubman.

‘Any expansion of the Port would require a truly massive and ongoing dredging and dumping programs. Almost 10 million cubic metres would be dredged, with 5.6 cubic metres of that being dumped in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area between Cape Cleveland and Magnetic Island. Because of the nature of the Bay, maintenance dredging is an almost annual affair.

Cleveland Bay is recognized by GBRMPA as a biodiversity hotspot and the impact on the ecosystem would be devastating.

Similarly, the impact on Magnetic Island’s water quality, fringing reef and tourism industry would be catastrophic.

'It is hard to believe the government's alleged commitment to improved Reef protection when we see such enthusiasm for endless development up and down the GBR coast.'

It is almost as if Queensland is thumbing its nose at UNESCO, which is scheduled to make a decision on whether or not to list the area as 'World Heritage in Danger' next week.

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