MEDIA RELEASE

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World Heritage Committee still concerned about the Reef

North Queensland Conservation Council commends the World Heritage Committee (WHC) for maintaining its strong stance on the management and protection of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

At its meeting in Doha yesterday, the WHC accepted a recommendation to keep Australia on notice that, unless there are significant improvements in the management of the Area, it faces being placed on the 'World Heritage in Danger' list at next year's meeting.

Australian politicians and departmental staff had been hoping that the threat would be lifted and had pushed hard in Doha against the recommendation.

But, by a large majority, the WHC accepted the draft recommendation put before it by expert staff of the WH Centre. It rejected amendments proposed by Malaysia and Japan, which would have watered down WHC concern about the government's decision to dump 3 million cubic metres of dredge spoil in the Marine Park at Abbot Point, a decision that NQCC is challenging in the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

The WHC noted that Australia had approved the dumping of the dredge spoil inside the property 'prior to having undertaken a comprehensive assessment of alternative and potentially less impacting development and disposal options'.

'This decision fully reflects the concerns of North Queensland Conservation Council', said NQCC Coordinator Wendy Tubman.

The WHC also considered that the Federal government's decision to handover power to make decisions about the Reef to the state government was 'premature'.

'NQCC goes further than that, believing that the handing over of power to the state government when it comes to decisions about the Reef or about any matter of national environmental significance will never be 'mature' or appropriate', said Ms Tubman.

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