Reef Guardian and reef catchment Councils seek State and Federal Government support for ensuring that coastal development does not damage the Great Barrier Reef

The Great Barrier Reef is under threat. Some of the threats are now being mitigated by actions taken by local councils, farmers and fishers to reduce their impacts (see references1,2,3 below).

In particular, Reef Guardian and catchment Councils have, collectively, hundreds of programs which reduce the impact of coastal communities and council activities upon the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. These programs address: water and catchment management; waste management; land management; climate change mitigation; community engagement and more.

These programs help to protect the Great Barrier Reef which brings to Queensland over 60 000 jobs and income of over $6 billion annually – much of which benefits our coastal constituents.

Recent scientific evidence, however, continues to report a decline in the Great Barrier Reef’s coral cover, concerns about the status of key inshore habitats and species, and degradation of the health of the Great Barrier Reef ecosystem (1,2,4-16).

Now, additional pressure will be realised with significant expansion of ports and industrial development accompanied by a projected near-doubling in shipping, major coastal reclamation works, massive seabed dredging and dredge spoil disposal – all either immediately adjacent to, or within, the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area 17-21.

We, as Reef Guardian and catchment Councils, believe these activities could further damage our Great Barrier Reef.

However we also support continued and sustainable development of Queensland’s coastal catchments.

Therefore, we ask State and Federal Governments work with Councils and industry to create a collaborative community that:

- Ensures new development within existing ports (including the dumping of dredge materials) does not impact on the World Heritage values of the Reef;
- Allows new port developments outside existing port areas if rigorous, independent scientific analysis shows that there would be less environmental impact by spreading industrial port development to other locations;
- Improves environmental standards and technology applied to existing industrial developments along the GBR coastline to ensure maximum environmental protection;
- Requires new development to minimise its footprint through efficient sharing of infrastructure; and
- Improves shipping management to minimise impacts on World Heritage values of the Reef.
References

10. Sobtzick, S., R. Hagiwara, A. Grech, and H. Marsh. 2012. Aerial survey of the urban coast of Queensland to evaluate the response of the dugong population to the widespread effects of the extreme weather events of the summer of 2010-11. Final report to the Australian Marine Mammal Centre and the National Environmental Research Program. James Cook University, Townsville.