

Alliance to Save Hinchinbrook Inc.**MINISTER OF WHALES AND PARROTS ABANDONS DUGONGS**

The proposal for construction of two rock breakwater walls at Oyster Point has been approved by the Commonwealth Environment Minister Ian Campbell.

In the only concession to the world heritage listed wildlife of the affected area, the Minister has diminished protection to the level of mere "signage".

Nothing but limits to boating access can protect dugongs and sea turtles from the sheer volume of boating traffic attracted by convenience of access; yet boating activity in this dugong habitat is completely uncontrolled.

Professor Helene Marsh's brief letter to the Cairns Post several years ago stated that scientific studies had shown that the dugong populations along the Queensland coast south of Cooktown had declined "drastically". She made the point that increasing boating traffic would eventually push dugongs out of their habitat.

In her letter Professor Marsh stated:

"This decline means that a precautionary approach to dugong conservation is required if dugongs are to remain one of the World Heritage values of the Great Barrier Reef Region. Precautionary management is particularly important in dugong habitats such as the Hinchinbrook region and in my opinion should address all anthropogenic impacts including vessel strike and the potential for vessel traffic to alienate dugongs from key habitats."

There is nothing precautionary about the Minister's Approval of the Breakwater walls.

The trouble is that there is nowhere for exiled dugongs to go: Professor Marsh has also reported (separately) that seagrass habitats too have diminished dramatically.

Every additional convenience that attracts vessel operators to use this area works together with existing infrastructure and lack of controls to multiply the impacts on world heritage listed dugongs, sea turtles, Snubfin, Hump-backed and other dolphins at risk.

In 1995 the Commonwealth Department of Environment gave this advice to Commonwealth Environment Minister Senator Robert Hill:

"Whilst possibly reducing the number of boat strikes, speed controls cannot be expected to reduce other vessel related threats to dugong, such as physical disturbance and noise, which may displace them from feeding grounds. If a full array of water sports, such as jet-skis, para-sailing and water skiing was to be present, disturbance levels would be raised. Any consent would need to ensure strict controls on the location and conduct of such activities and be managed through Queensland legislation ..."

Ms Moorhouse said: "Although Senator Hill gave consent for mangrove clearing and Port Hinchinbrook Stage I (as it is now known), at least he regarded the dugongs highly enough that he did not grant consent for breakwater walls to be built in the Hinchinbrook Passage at Oyster Point."

"Senator Campbell, on the other hand, appears to have joined the Queensland Government in abandoning the Hinchinbrook dugongs to gradual extinction."

CONTACT:

Authorised Spokesperson for ASH: Margaret Moorhouse (Vice President)

NEW PHONE NO: 07 4779 6990 Mobile 0427 724 052

hinchinbrookalliance@gmail.com

--

Margaret Moorhouse
Alliance to Save Hinchinbrook Inc
PO Box 2457 Townsville Q 4810
hinchinbrookalliance@gmail.com
ph07 4779 6690
mobile 0427 724 052