

Alliance to Save Hinchinbrook Inc.

**GIRRIMAY NATIONAL PARK DECLARED: ADJACENT SPOIL
PONDS HAVE TO GO**

The Alliance to Save Hinchinbrook is delighted at the creation of Girimay National Park.

Part of Girimay National Park lies along the coast between the Hinchinbrook Passage mangroves and the site of Keith Williams' rejected "Port Hinchinbrook Stage II". It contains habitat for the *endangered* mahogany glider.

Margaret Moorhouse said "We thank a succession of Queensland Environment Ministers – Rod Welford, Dean Wells, Desley Boyle, and Lindy Nelson-Carr – for keeping the promise made ten years ago to protect this coastal wetland as national park."

"ASH now calls on the Queensland government to prevent forest death in Girimay National Park. >From the Bruce Highway south of Cardwell the upper limbs of the dead trees can be seen above the surrounding vegetation of the national park. Entire dead areas are obvious from the air".

"Keith Williams' spoil ponds are preventing the natural flow of freshwater from protecting the coastal forest from salinity. These great levees have to go".

Ten years ago the developer Keith Williams first tried to gain control over Unallocated State Land (USL) Lot 33, now part of the new Girimay National Park. There was talk of plans for airport and golf course.

Eight years ago the Hon Rod Welford, the then Minister for Environment and Natural Resources, rejected the developer's lease application. He promised that USL Lot 33 would be protected as national park.

During the early years the developer had built a containment pond four metres above ground level, to hold acid soils. It stretches along a kilometre of the boundary between the development site and the present Girimay National Park. Government documents obtained under Freedom of Information legislation show that this "pond" was allowed as a temporary structure. *Twelve years later it is still there.*

The spoil pond contains acid sulphate soils excavated from the development site, and acid dredge spoil. In 1999 Australian Senators saw for themselves and walked in the acid mud that had spilt into this land from the spoil pond. Through most its life the acid contents of this "temporary" pond have found their way into the land that is now Girimay National Park.

The pond walls also act as a levee bank, blocking several small creeks and the wet season overland freshwater flow that the Girimay National Park melaleuca wetlands need to flourish close to the sea. After twelve years of inadequate fresh water supply the soil salinity of the forest has increased. Thousands of tall melaleuca trees, rare *Livistona drudei* palms, pandanus and other trees have died.

For some of this damage the developer was fined– a mere \$1,500.

Margaret Moorhouse said "conservationists will be delighted that this fragile land along the World Heritage listed Hinchinbrook Passage is now national park and that its name recognises the local aboriginal people."

"But now the land must not be left to die. The "temporary" spoil ponds must go. They must be removed to restore the overland flow of fresh water so that the northern part of Girimay National Park can survive".

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SEE ALSO <http://www.hinchinbrook.info/other/ASH%20contact.php>

and www.hinchinbrook.info

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