

Alliance to Save Hinchinbrook Inc.

OYSTER POINT:

WHO WILL PAY FOR SINKING BREAKWALLS?

The cost of the subsidence of the breakwater walls under construction at Oyster Point has blown out.

The increase in rock required due to the walls collapsing and sinking has resulted in a sharp increase in the cost, and has pushed the soft seabottom sideways into the dredged area.

The purpose of the breakwaters was to *reduce the developer's cost* of ongoing dredging in the access channels to the *privately owned* Port Hinchinbrook Marina and Canal Estate. The Applicant however was the Cardwell Shire Council.

Why the local shire has taken on this expensive and risky project for a private developer has never been satisfactorily explained.

A letter (Nov 23) from Cardwell Shire Council advised ASH that all material would come from Stony Creek quarry, a condition of their Approval for the breakwalls.

Within days of the Council's letter, trucks began carting rock from a quarry at Murray Upper – an additional 60 km of travel and an hour's idle time for the excavator for every truck load.

The same letter advised - after work on the breakwalls had begun - that the Council was yet to obtain a legal commitment that the developer would pay for the project.

The blow-out in budget and lack of secure contract may have long term ramifications for this very small Shire, the public purse, and the environment.

Margaret Moorhouse said "What if Cardwell Properties doesn't pay? Keith Williams has now stated publicly (CH 7 news 28 Dec 06) that Council would not have to pay. We did not hear Mr Williams explain who would pay, nor say that he or his development company would pay."

"In any case" Ms Moorhouse said "public statements are not legal contracts. Mr Williams made similar statements about the huge ongoing costs of the maintenance dredging. While reassuring the public that Council would not have to pay for it, Mr Williams has privately asked Port Hinchinbrook residents to pressure Council into paying."

"With construction costs blowing out and environmental issues looming, Council needs a contract backed by a large cash bond, to protect its ratepayers and the environment" Ms Moorhouse said.

"We opposed this project because of its long term effects on the World Heritage listed Hinchinbrook Passage, because this ugly experiment in a World Heritage Area was unacceptable, and because we have no doubt that the breakwalls will not be the answer to the marina's excessive siltation problems".

"We are now concerned that the existing environmental problems will be exacerbated by dispute as to who will pay" Ms Moorhouse concluded.

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