

Don's sand issues aired

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MINISTER for Natural Resources Andrew Cripps has given his assurance his department will do whatever it can to ensure sand is regularly extracted from the Don River to help alleviate build-up issues.

Mr Cripps, along with Federal Member for Dawson George Christensen, met with representatives from the Don River Improvement Trust, Bowen Collinsville Enterprise, Whitsunday Regional Council and farmers representatives yesterday to discuss the Don River sand and potential flooding issues.

"At the moment less than half of the annual allocated 77,000 cubic metres is being removed from the river," Mr Cripps said.

"I am willing to crack down on latency issues, those who hold licenses will need to demonstrate they intend to ensure a consistent removal of sand from the river otherwise their licenses will be reviewed," he said.

"I also offer a one-off removal of 100,000 cubic metres in recognition of the commitment and hard work of the many stakeholders' hard work and dedication in solving the problem.



Discussing the Don River sand build-up issues are Member for Burdekin Rosemary Menkens, Minister for Natural Resources Andrew Cripps, Bowen Collinsville Enterprise member John Finlay and Member for Dawson George Christensen. **Picture:** Nadine O'Neill

"I will also review the current cap of 77,000 cubic metres.

"Under existing plans landowners who live along and adjacent to the river are able to extract up to 500 cubic metres of sand annually without a permit as long as they don't use it for commercial purposes.

"This message needs to be put out there to these landowners. It's not a huge volume but nevertheless it's still sand being removed on a regular basis."

The Minister also said the locals should take ownership of the project and that all stakeholders work together as one body.

Mr Cripps said his department's jurisdiction was above the tidal influence of the river and urged stakeholders to meet with the Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection Andrew Powell at next month's State Government Community Cabinet meeting in Ayr.

It was decided a deputation made up by DRIT, BCE and council representatives would attend the cabinet meeting.

The council will also undertake a study that includes a hydrological and hydraulic analysis, flood mapping, and identification of flood mitigation options, of the Don River, funded by a \$149,000 state government grant already allocated to council. The study is expected by June next year.

Extension for annual report

WHITSUNDAY Regional Council expects to adopt its 2011-12 annual report by the end of May, six months after the usual time requirements under Local Government regulations.

Council CEO Scott Waters confirmed on Monday council's audit committee would meet next Wednesday to adopt the council's financial statements.

Mr Waters said the delay in adopting the statements for the 2011-12 financial year had been primarily due to the finalisation of the Natural Disaster Recovery Roads Arrangements (NDRRA) program ineligible works and some budget overspends.

"Council has been in constant contact with the Department of Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience in the granting of extensions required to satisfy Queensland Audit Office requirements," he said.

Under the Local Government Act 2009 the council is required to adopt an annual report within one month after adopting its financial statements.

Within two weeks of the report's adoption, council must publish it on its website.

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