

Bowen Recreational Fishing & Outdoors Club

NQBP Dredging Proposal Meeting

Wednesday February, 6th 2013.

The meeting was opened by the Chairman Stephen Darwen at 7.00pm with a general welcome and thanks to all those attending.

Present:- Ian Andersen, Gordon Little, Dave Clark, Kevin Collins, Terry Pilcher, Matthew Magin, Sam Maynard, Daryl McPhee, Richard Quincey, Rosemary Menkens MP, Matt Quadrell, Bernie Taylor, Joe Linton, Nathan Rynn, Travis Rynn, Brett Bauer, Jamie Laird, Ann Mecklem, Brian Mecklem, Ivan Garrod, Jeff Stewart- Harris, Andrew Willcox.

Apology:- George Christensen – Federal member for Dawson

Paul McLaughlan - Chairman Tourism Bowen

All members introduced themselves in turn, many expressing concern for how they thought this proposed large scale dredging was going to have an adverse effect on the environment and their livelihoods.

Matt Quadrell asked for a personal summary to be given by each attendee at the end of the meeting.

Gordon Little expressed his concern as a local business relying heavily on recreational fishing.

The Chairman then introduced Jeff Stewart – Harris representing NQBP to give a presentation.

He said that the targeted submission date of the 15th February did not give a lot of time to respond from now.

He apologized for some of the wording and terms in their document which he acknowledged could be seen to be offensive to some people.

He said they were now here with humility to hear what everyone had to say.

There are 3 different proponents for coal terminals, BHP, GVK and Adani and the total dredging required for this would be 3 million cubic metres over a 10 week period. However, it was stressed that the whole project was not being undertaken over a single 10 week period but would be done in 3 separate periods between 2013 and 2018.

He said that in comparison to other dredging this was not a particularly large project, being 1/15th the size of dredging carried out at Gladstone and 1/10th the size of what would be needed for the multi - cargo project.

Jeff dealt with - 1. The scale of the proposal

2. The type of materials they were dealing with and

3. How they would handle the site.

He stressed that the project was not large by comparison and that the materials they were dealing with were sand with some silt – but mainly clean sand. There would be little effect on the disposal site or the receptor site.

Dredging would be undertaken outside the turtle nesting season and would avoid impact on migratory species. They are also aware of seagrass areas. The turbidity that would be caused would be only 1/3 of natural turbidity during a normal wet season.

He concluded by saying that they are interested in their concerns and urged all to bring them up tonight.

The Chairman then introduced Sam Maynard (Project Manager). Sam said that they are not saying there would be no impact but they will ensure that impact would be minimal. He said that the closing date for the PER was the 15th February, and urged all present to start responding.

When examining options for disposal, cost was not considered in the first instance. After consideration it was decided that offshore was the most preferred. Land disposal would require 180 hectares. There was not enough room on the SDA site and another site would have to be found. This would create other social and environmental problems.

After deciding on the offshore option they looked for a disposal area within 150 km of the dredging site, and inside the shipping lane. After a process of elimination this seemed to be the preferred site, and there was a 6 – 9 month time frame to settle on the location. At the time the Catalina wreck site didn't come up, but has been considered since. Measures are being put into place to protect the wreck.

He believes that plumes will have the biggest impact during the project and they believe they have got the modelling right. Plumes will be constantly monitored and will not go anywhere near Holbourne Island. Modelling was carried out in 2009 during the proposed dredging period.

At this stage general discussion and protest broke out around the room. There was general disbelief in the modelling carried out.

With dredging proposed, for 1st April, there didn't seem to be any modelling done on the dive site. It was also pointed out that there was a green area within Abbot Bay. Ian Andersen said that we lived here for lifestyle and recreation so wanted to protect our environment – notice should be taken of the knowledge the professionals have, who are working in the area every day.

Gordon Little asked why spoil could not be stored on land and used later to develop the MCF.

Jeff answered that funding for such infrastructure is enormous and at this stage is not feasible. Offshore is the right fit for this project, but they are noting points at this meeting and will be responding to any new queries. He said that they are only in the application process, and if it goes ahead we have to realize that dredging is a very highly regulated process carrying very severe conditions

Ivan Garrod pointed out that Abbot Point was originally chosen because dredging was not necessary, and asked about maintenance dredging. When told maintenance dredging would not be required, he countered that he did not believe them.

It was pointed out that turbidity stops light from entering the seagrass, and any effect on the seagrass would affect the whole food chain. The modelling carried out on turbidity did not seem to be believed from general comments by attendees.

Matt Quadrell said that the size of the area is 400 hectares and it would be unknown how long it would take the fishery to recover – if ever.

Ian Andersen asked how deep they would need to dredge. The answer was half to one and a half metres. To get this depth naturally you would only have to go out another 180 metres into the bay, and he thought this would be a better solution. The NQBP representatives said that this would create safety issues with the operation of the Port.

The Chairman pulled up the discussion and introduced Daryl McPhee from Bond University to report on the scientific findings of the fishing effort in the proposed dredge area.

During Daryl's presentation there was much discussion on the validity of some of the data.

Matt Quadrell works this area and says that it is a scallop nursery and would be destroyed should dumping occur to this extent.

There was some discussion on how data was being collected and a view was put that we were getting wrong scientific results because available data was not correct.

Darryl explained to the group his source of the data he used for this submission which was from fishermen's records, but knew it was not really correct and the fishermen needed to do something about the way they record their catches.

Gordon Little said that boat registrations in Bowen were up and in fact were the highest from Bundaberg to Cairns. This would suggest that recreational fishing would be increasing in Bowen. The sales through his retail business would also indicate this.

Kevin Collins was wondering if large rock could be dumped in with the dredged material possibly to form an artificial reef. This has been done elsewhere accidentally but with successful results.

Matt Quadrell was worried about the large trawl area which was going to be lost (400 hectares).

Richard Quincy from GBRMPA said that apart from any enhancements – look at what is coming out the other end of the process to see that the fishery is not being adversely affected.

The question was asked about farm chemicals. Will the dredged materials contain farm chemicals which will be taken out to an area near the reef?

Sam answered that the area has been tested for chemicals and has come up clean.

Jeff said there is now a better understanding of studying core samples for information.

140 samples were taken of the dredge site.

Ian Anderson – Dumping on land – is this not able to be done?

Jeff Stewart – Harris – There is not enough land near the port to do this.

Ian – Is there a future for use of the SDA?

Jeff – Development of the Multi cargo Facility would require a land-backed area which could be used for fill from the dredge site. Long lead times are required for this. He doesn't see this happening in the near future.

Ian – Store the material on land until the port is ready to go.

Jeff – 150 hectares would be required to store the materials.

Ian – Most of us aren't happy with it being put into the sea.

Nathan Rynn – This will impact on our business income which keeps our families.

Brian Mecklem – Allowing this to go ahead would be like granting permission to dump your rubbish in your neighbour's back yard.

Gordon Little – 180 Hectares of land is not a big area and the proponents should be made to go down this track and pay for it.

Joe Linton – Site specific information needs to be given to the people and better interaction with the people. If you bring the people with you, you will lessen the unrest.

Gordon Little says destruction of the fishery will impact on tourism and business locally.

Matt Quadrell – The site is very close to the southern part of the shipping lane and this will be a safety issue.

Nathan Rynn – Dugong displacement will change the fishery in the Burdekin and Upstart Bay.

Jeff Stewart – Harris – Port planning has been piece meal in the past but UNESCO has demanded master planning for a total port management system for the whole coast for the next 40 – 50 years.

He discussed management of the anchorage adjacent to the port and concern for boats trawling around anchorages.

There is a world - wide anti coal sentiment connected to green groups, Get-up, etc. Activists target the port as the soft underbelly in the supply chain to Ports Corp. Have to find ways of working together.

He recommended for all to fill out the PER sheets and get as many fishermen as far as Bundaberg to get as many opinions as possible. The decision will ultimately be that of the regulators- maybe the regulators can be approached by fishermen to make them aware of their concerns.

It was pointed out that if there are concerns it should not be up to the fishermen to push the issue. The proponent needs to be dealing with the points themselves to address the issue.

The Catalina site needs to be protected, just as the Yongala site would be. The Catalina site is a grave site and hopefully in the near future it will be a designated war grave . Will you protect this site?

There was a suggestion that maybe a group of fishermen could record statistics to establish the true value of the fishery.

Matt Quadrell made mention of the full page NQBP Key Facts advertisement in “The Bowen Independent” noting various points especially where it mentioned working with the fisherman throughout the project monitoring any impacts when up until now there had been no consultation with them.

Andrew Willcox suggested that it could be a waste of time if the total value (whether it be \$1 million or \$10 million) was not going to make any difference to the mechanics of the port project.

Gordon Little commented that extension of trestles or placement of spoil on land were the only two options supported by the group.

After a long discussion Jeff summarized the concerns into 8 dot points as follows:-

1. The fishing and related representatives believed that the value of the commercial fishing industry in Bowen is understated in the PER.
2. The various representatives also believed that the value of the recreational fishing industry was understated in the PER, particularly in relation to the flow on economic effects (accommodation, tackle shops, boar storage, fuel and bait outlets, maintenance and repairs etc).
3. The various representatives believe that the environmental impacts on all facets of fishing were understated in the PER, particularly as big tides and big winds already make the water “dirty” now reducing the number of available fishing days, with the major concern being that the dredging and spoil disposal will further reduce the number of fishing days.
4. The various representatives believe that the use of the offshore disposal site will destroy a trawling ground nursery.
5. There was concern that the displacement of Dugong, turtles and protected species would create “go slow” zones in other nearby fishing areas leaving those areas burdened with less efficient fishing practices.
6. There were concerns about the safety of using the off shore disposal ground, because it appears to be close to or in the southern transit of the shipping lane, and also due to the transits of the dredger into that trafficked area during the dredging program.
7. The various representatives believe that the only viable method of disposal was on land as they did not accept offshore disposal as an option.
8. The various representatives believed that alternatives to avoid or minimise dredging should be considered including locating key infrastructure in deeper water.

It was agreed to use these points as a formal submission to the PER.

As the Chairman brought the meeting to a close, Ian Andersen thanked all for coming and especially those who have travelled and wished everyone a safe journey home.

The meeting closed at 10 pm.