

Submission on Independent Review of the Port of Gladstone

This independent review is the only good news about the Gladstone area in a long time. I only hope that the results will reveal the poor way in which the port has been managed, the consequences of which can be seen by anyone visiting the area. The Port of Gladstone has become an unpleasant place that echoes the infamous history of Queenstown in Tasmania, and is becoming as much of a case of unsustainable development and poor environmental practice.

I will mention here only some of the environmental impacts that I want to emphasise. The biggest concern I have with further development in the Port of Gladstone is the massive amounts of dredging proposed. Dredging disturbs toxins and heavy metals that have been deposited over time from the area's long port history. These toxins and heavy metals impact the entire ecosystem in the port, including fish caught by recreational and commercial fishermen. Majorly increased turbidity from dredging will kill seagrass communities that are an important feeding ground for dugong in-between Hervey Bay and Shoalwater Bay. There is also the issue of the 'disposal' of the material that is being dredged.

Secondly, the creation of infrastructure for new coal and LNG exports is supporting an unsustainable industry that has long-term social, economic and environmental impacts that far outweigh any short-term economic gains.

Thirdly, threatened species such as turtles, whales and dugongs are present around Gladstone Harbour that are vulnerable to further proposed developments. These marine animals are iconic species in Queensland and are already listed as threatened. This new threat to them could be a tipping point for some populations.

I understand that the Review is examining whether these environmental impacts will result from development in the area, and I sincerely hope that the science speaks for itself and shows the truth that further development in the Gladstone region is unsustainable and poses many threats. Instead of further development, the current infrastructure should be better utilised for optimum efficiency with minimum environmental impacts.