

Submission to the

**Independent Review of the
Port of Gladstone**

Prepared by:
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Position Overview

The Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the Independent Review of the Port of Gladstone commissioned by the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities.

QTIC recognises the Government's aim, through the Review, is to balance the protection of important habitats and environmental values with the need to facilitate economic infrastructure that ensures the growth of Queensland's four pillar economy. QTIC, as the State's peak body for tourism, affirms its strong position to ensure that the interests of the tourism industry remain significant and competitive alongside other government interest, particular in regard to the other three pillars. It is with this position that the following submission is made.

Of particular concern is the ability and flexibility that is given to future port development/expansion articulated in the *Gladstone Ports Corporation 50 Year Strategic Plan*, in light of risk and imminent and irreparable damage to the Great Barrier Reef¹. The plan does not present a suitably balanced approach to economic growth and the environmental values of the marine park have not being adequately addressed.

Tourism, as one of the four pillars, is a long-term economic driver for our state and heavily relies on our natural assets to survive. The Great Barrier Reef not only serves as a major tourist attraction for our state, but is an exceptional drawcard for Australia - our country is internationally renowned for its ecological diversity for which the Great Barrier Reef is arguably the frontrunner. The World Economic Forum report 2013 confirmed that Australia's tourism and travel competitiveness,

"...continues to be characterized by a number of clear strengths, including its rich natural resources and the highest number of World Heritage natural sites in the world, benefiting from diverse fauna and a comparatively pristine natural environment. Given the importance of the environment for much of its leisure tourism, it is notable that the stringency and enforcement of its environmental regulations are well assessed"

QTIC acknowledges the Great Barrier Reef as a unique and precious asset to our state, a long-term solution for continued economic growth is pivotal to reaching the governments Destination Q targets by 2020.

Queensland Tourism Industry Council

QTIC is the State's peak body for tourism in Queensland and represents the interests of business operators, 20 sector associations, 3,000 regional members and all of Queensland's 13 Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs).

QTIC works in partnership with government agencies and industry bodies at a local, state and national level to strengthen the voice of tourism in all relevant policy forums. QTIC's partnerships

¹ UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Mission Report, Reactive Monitoring Mission to Great Barrier Reef (Australia) 6th – 14th March 2012.

with the industry and government enable a greater level of responsiveness to increasingly diverse industry skills, training and business development needs of the tourism industry in regions.

KEY PRIORITIES

The key priorities support the broader intent of government to ensure ongoing protection and management of the natural values of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and adjacent coastal zone. The priorities can be achieved through a regulatory framework that realises economic, community and conservation benefits of Queensland's protected natural assets. This can be achieved through:

- Effective and responsive leadership
- Sustainable use of natural assets
- Supportive of innovation

The priorities below strongly support such a framework.

a) all previous review findings and information used as a basis for the current approvals for development in the Port of Gladstone;

- There is significant local expertise in government, industry and the research community that could be engaged more effectively to collect, investigate and apply high quality information to form the basis for the current approvals for development in the Port of Gladstone.
- The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority continues to engage with a number of Australian and Queensland Government agencies, researchers, industry representatives and members of the public in assessment and monitoring of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The following two assessments should inform the basis for approvals for development in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and adjacent coastal zone, including the Port of Gladstone.
 - The Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report.
 - Great Barrier Reef Region Strategic Assessment Report 2013

b) current and future planning, development and management of the Port of Gladstone, having regard to the *Gladstone Ports Corporation 50 Year Strategic Plan* and associated developments and activities within Gladstone Harbour and adjoining land and offshore areas;

- The *Gladstone Ports Corporation 50 Year Strategic Plan* and the *Western Basin Master Plan* require review and improvement; including further cumulative assessment covering economic, environmental and social considerations for the region, Queensland and Australia.
- The tourism sector expects the state government to approach current and future planning, development and management of the Port of Gladstone from a transparent and holistic

perspective, taking into account competing land use demands and impacts from other industries, including tourism. To reach the significant growth targets that the Queensland Government has set for the tourism industry, critical assets such as the Great Barrier Reef must be protected and appropriately valued in all policy and planning decisions.

c) environmental concerns in the Port of Gladstone, including the environmental performance of consented developments and operations and the impacts of other contributory factors, such as natural causes, catchment runoff, established industrial operations, urban expansion and floodplain changes;

- Where dredging has been demonstrated to be necessary, resultant spoil should be dumped onshore or used for reclamation and that the dumping of spoil in the World Heritage Area or Marine Park should only be permitted as an absolute last resort.
- Where alternatives to new port development/increased port activity can be identified, QTIC's view is that this is to be the preferred course of action so the integrity of the Great Barrier Reef (and the coastline) can be maintained and any destruction avoided. QTIC understands the costs associated with this approach, but stress that these costs affect the resource industry but allow for long-term economic sustainability in the tourism industry, an industry that is continual and directly affects the lives on the community.

d) planning arrangements and design standards for the optimisation of port development and operation that accord with best practice environmental standards that may be applicable to ports in the Great Barrier Reef Region; and

- Any expansion in shipping export capacity along the Great Barrier Reef coast should be based on long-term needs, rather than demand spikes or speculative projections.
- Port developments should be contained within existing, designated commercial port areas.
- 'Existing ports' should be those ports that currently serve as significant resource shipping facilities, not any port that currently only provides limited services such as Port Alma.
- The tourism industry is particularly concerned about the proposed significant change of use and expansion at Port Alma, the proposal has significant environmental impacts and pose a risk to current and future tourism use. Of specific concern is the proposed transshipping of coal.
- Trans-shipping of cargo in the Marine Park should not be allowed, given the proven inherent environmental risks.
- Appropriate resources to deal with any shipping incident must be in place in suitable geographic locations. The potential threat to the marine environment and the potential

reputational impact on tourism of a significant shipping accident on or near the Great Barrier Reef are catastrophic.

- Shipping rules and regulation must be effective and supported by strong enforcement and appropriate penalty regimes.

In considering the above, the Review will have regard to and, if necessary, provide advice on, lessons learned for the future development and operation of Gladstone and other port areas within and adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage property, including the implications for Traditional Owners and the local community dependent on the resources of the area.

- The Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2009 recognises that direct traditional owner involvement in natural resource management activities not only brings environmental benefits to an area but also economic participation, development opportunities and health and social benefits to the broader Indigenous community.

Further Enquiries

We welcome the opportunity for further discussion regarding the policy and the content of this submission. For all enquiries, please contact Daniel Gschwind (07) 3236 1445 or email policy@qtic.com.au.