



C12/2982

Mr Andrew Jeremijenko
andrewjenko@hotmail.com

Dear Mr Jeremijenko

I refer to your email of 11 March 2012 to the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, the Hon Tony Burke MP, concerning the impacts of dredging on the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. The Minister has asked me to thank you for your correspondence and to reply on his behalf.

The Australian Government is committed to protecting the world heritage values of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park through our national environmental law, the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). Under this law, world heritage values and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park are matters of national environmental significance. Other matters of national environmental significance include: listed threatened species (such as the humpback whale); listed migratory species; wetlands of international importance; and Commonwealth marine areas. Projects that are likely to have a significant impact on these matters are rigorously assessed and only approved subject to strict conditions to protect these values.

I note your concerns about dredging and your suggestions for alternative approaches. The department continues to closely monitor impacts of the dredging in Gladstone Harbour to ensure the proponent acts in accordance with their approval conditions and environment management plans. Assessment of sediments was undertaken under an *Environment Protection (Sea Dumping) Act 1981* permit application and the EPBC Act assessment process. The department received expert advice that the material that was to be dredged and dumped at sea met the required environmental standards.

As part of Australia's response to concerns raised by the World Heritage Committee, part of UNESCO, the Australian and Queensland governments have embarked on a comprehensive strategic assessment of the entire Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and adjacent coastal zone. The strategic assessment will consider direct, indirect and cumulative impacts on matters of national environmental significance from existing, planned and potential future coastal development activities including those associated with increased shipping and port infrastructure development. This approach will ensure protection of valuable environmental assets, while at the same time enabling sustainable, long-term development along the Great Barrier Reef coastal area.

Draft terms of reference for the comprehensive strategic assessment have been released for public comment until 30 April 2012 and I encourage interested people and groups to contribute their views as part of the consultation process. For more information about the comprehensive strategic assessment and further opportunities for you to provide input, please visit the Department's website at:
www.environment.gov.au/epbc/notices/assessments/great-barrier-reef.html

Thank you for writing on this matter.

Yours sincerely



Mary Colreavy
Great Barrier Reef Taskforce
Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities

13 April 2012