

Attention: Coordinator-General

State Development Areas
Dept of Infrastructure & Planning
PO Box 15009 City East Qld 4002

By: Email and Fax (07-3229 7315)

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: PROPOSED STATE DEVELOPMENT AREA EXTENSION (CURTIS ISLAND) – SUBMISSION

I wish to make a formal submission on the proposed extension to the State Development Area which is to include the addition of a significant portion of the southern end of Curtis Island as detailed in the Community Consultation information pack dated May 2008.

My understanding is that the inclusion of this portion of Curtis Island is to provide land for proposed liquefied natural gas plants and other industry including buffer zones.

Background

My family has owned 23 Seaview Esp Southend (Lot 401 S7342) for some 35 years. I am 35 years old and spent the majority of my childhood on Curtis Island, at times living permanently when my family owned and operated the only Shop/Petrol Station/Bottleshop at South End and at other times on weekends and holidays. To this day I still travel regularly to the island for family holidays. Curtis Island has always provided a safe family orientated getaway, one that abounds in natural beauty with an exquisite and unique ecosystem. I hold the years I have spent on Curtis Island sacred and consider growing up on Curtis Island a great privilege. A privilege I hope to pass on to the next generation of my family and their descendants.

Time spent on Curtis Island was never restricted to just the settlement of South End. Considerable time was spent exploring, enjoying and appreciating the natural beauty and biodiversity the island has to offer, the plants the animals and the ecosystem of which they form a part.

In particular I have vivid and continuing fond memories of me and my family, and now extended family enjoying:

- Fishing, crabbing and camping all along the magnificent eastern coastline of ocean beaches and headlands overlooking the Coral Sea from South End north to the Bluff, to Turtle St, Joey Lees, Aeroplane Beach through to Cape Capricorn and the breathtaking beauty of Yellow Patch and the various creeks and estuaries to Cape Keppel and around to Sea Hill.
- Driving 4WD's or beach buggies and quads from South End up the Main beach to the Bluff in search of beach worms and a feed of whiting.
- Exploring the Lagoon to watch wild birds and wild pigs during the wet season
- Late night walks along Main Beach during Turtle nesting season at high tide, marvelling at the size of the female loggerheads and their determination to dig a nest in the dunes, lay a clutch of 100 eggs then dragging herself exhausted back to the water. Waiting patiently as the weeks tick by, returning vigilantly to the site awaiting the first signs of movement when the hatchlings emerge and make their life or death dash for the waters edge.
- Trekking the mud flats to the two creeks near South End at low tide catching bream by hand and bait netting for prawns, setting the pots and enjoying the rewards of fresh mud crab.
- Bushwalking over the flats and beyond the old homestead, watching the vegetation change from grassland to eucalypt forest to paperbark to salt flats and the mangrove swamps of Enfield Creek. Learning the fine art of dealing with swarms of sandflies and mosquitoes.

- I remember when my father was caretaker of Ocean View Cattle Station when it was sold by Jock Baird to the American, and spending time hunting for lobbies in the water holes on the way to Enfield Creek at the back of the property. I still do this with the family and the children today.
- Driving from the Ocean View Old Homestead in and hiking up Ship Hill for a sunset spectacle across to Mt Larcom during winter.
- Hiking into Hobble Gully from the Bluff watching endless mobs of Kangaroos and solitary Dingoes going about their business.
- Making the arduous journey through the bulldust by old land rover up from South End to Monte Christo and Aeroplane Beach and being silenced by sunrise over the magnitude of the wetland plains and its abundance of bird and animal life.
- Much time was enjoyed in the Narrows fishing for salmon and bream and catching some serious size mud crabs, many a time walking the boats through the endless maze of mud flats and tidal creeks at low tide to get where you wanted to go.
- Spending endless days in the Grahams Creek estuaries crabbing and bream and salmon fishing, always on the lookout for the elusive saltwater croc (never did see one only ever heard the camp fire stories).
- Being woken up by sunrise at South End and with that first deep morning breath smelling the sweet salt air.

Curtis Today

In recent years in the name of Ecological preservation a large parcel of what used to be private leasehold land on Curtis has been converted into Curtis Island National Park, Curtis Island Conservation Park and Curtis State Forests and as a result a lot of areas I accessed as a kid are no longer permitted. Whilst this has restricted the activities and extent of the island I can now enjoy and share with the children of our extended family, I do agree with the environmental experts behind this move, and that is to recognise the ecological significance of Curtis Island and the value contained in preserving its natural and cultural heritage for future generations.

Concerns & Queries, Condition & Integrity

Some of the concerns and queries I have on the proposed extension, and this list is far from exhaustive, are as follows:

- Lets face facts – regardless of what expert studies are undertaken to support the environmentally sound nature of the industry to be developed on Curtis, and I am certain that regardless of the type and extent of the industry proposed scientific studies in support of the proposal will materialise, over time we have all come to realise that industry and the environment just do not go hand in hand. It begs the question, why when you have such a piece of natural beauty like Curtis Island that many an expert will attest to being unique in character and ecologically significant, why then would you take the risk of opening up a portion of it for large scale heavy industry?
- My family also owned a house on the Esplanade at Barney Point in close proximity to QAL and the Wharves, so I can say with absolute accuracy from first hand experience, that regardless of how stringent the emissions controls, process and procedure of heavy industry are there is always pollution, pollution you can smell, pollution you can see, pollution you can touch and pollution you can taste in the air and the water. So you can understand that regardless of what scientific evidence is put forward to support the industry on Curtis I will never be convince that there will be “no pollution” and “no detrimental affect on the environment and ecology of Curtis Island”.
- How can such a large portion of Curtis Island be considered ecologically important enough to warrant conversion to Nation Parks, State Forests and Conservation Reserves, yet only a few kilometres away the same island be considered “best land use” is potentially environmentally damaging heavy industry?
- Why is such a large parcel of land required on Curtis? Who set its boundaries and why?

- Why is Curtis Island required at all? I understand that of 13 sites considered Curtis was chosen as suitable. Are the public able to get access to the criteria for choosing the Curtis site over and above the mainland sites? Perhaps the public need be made aware of the basis of the decisions behind choosing Curtis above the alternative sites. And if the short-fallings of the mainland sites can be addressed adequately to give them favour over Curtis, has this been exhausted? Please assure me that not the only real reason that Curtis has been chosen is due to its deep water access on the western side that saves costs in preparation and continued maintenance for shipping channels?
- From my understanding the topography of the area of Curtis to be utilised would not be particularly user friendly. Depending entirely on where it is that the industrial plants are proposed to be built the contours of the land would not be suitable. All along the western perimeter of the extension zone, where deep water access is available, there extends a ridge from Grahams Creek to Hamilton Point that includes Ship Hill. If these areas are to be utilised how much bulk earthworks are required and how will this change the visual aesthetics of Curtis Is, substantial alteration I would have thought? And what are the costs of these major earthworks? How do these costs compare to utilisation of other alternative sites with a more favourable topography?
- Grahams Creek – area is to be included. This area of creeks, estuaries, tidal mud flats and salt pans supports extensive mangrove habitats and large expanse of marine wetlands and salt marsh supporting an array of fauna. What guarantees are there that this sensitive ecosystem will not be harmed or suffer degradation by the construction and operation of heavy industry in close proximity? Under the current Marine Park Zoning Grahams Creek is a Habitat Protection Zone, including all the foreshores and mangrove wetlands. Refer to map of GBR Marine Park Zoning [attached](#). What guarantees and safeguards are in place to protect this environment? And how can you have a Habitat Protection Zone being utilised for large scale toxic industry, it just doesn't make sense?
- What guarantees can be given that fish breeding areas such as Grahams Creek will not be adversely affected?
- How can the Government do a deal to release land for an Eco-Resort at Turtle St, being mindful of the environmental significance and sensitivity of the island and then turn around and release a huge chunk of this pristine wilderness for large scale environmentally detrimental industry within 5kms?
- The proposed extension stretches within a couple of kilometres from the settlement of South End, how can the Government guarantee the safety and comfort of residents from noxious gas emission, toxic waste, fumes, smoke, explosions, breaches in containment of leaks or hazards likely to cause undue disturbance or annoyance to the residents or their property, especially in a North West wind? Even if you can mitigate such hazards from harming or causing nuisance to residents why would you even risk it when other sites are available that are not in close proximity to residential areas?
- The eastern boundary of the extension proposes to include the foreshore of Main Beach all the way to the bluff and beyond to the headlands of Turtle Street. Why is it necessary to include such an area? What restriction on access for residents to these areas that are constantly used for recreation? Does this zone preclude access to the areas of Curtis north of the extension?
- Central Queensland, and in particular the Gladstone Region with its explosive growth rate and increasing population has a limited number of quality recreational areas close to water, especially beaches. Why then would the Government want to cordon off a substantial amount of the already limited beaches in the area to be used for environmentally detrimental industry or as a buffer zone thereto? This in itself makes no sense. As Gladstone continues to grow, and it will, why remove land that has recreational value that actually adds value to the quality of life of the workforce that Gladstone's industry wants to attract?
- Access to the island industry by proposed bridge, what are all the details of this proposition? Who will be able to use this access? How? Where does it go to? Does it link with South End or the north of Curtis? What restrictions on residents using this bridge?
- What is the sense behind having a Marine Park Green Zone, that's a National Park Marine Zone (just north of Connor Bluff heading north on the eastern side of Curtis) that adjoins heavy industrial land?

This green zone prohibits almost all activity where even research requires a permit, yet right next door you have massive polluting heavy industry. Surely conservation and heavy industry are opposite ends of the spectrum?

- What guarantees can the Government give that the location of large scale heavy industry so close to the residential areas of South End won't have a detrimental affect on property values?
- What possible effects could this industry have on the Capricorn Bunker Group and Great Barrier Reef, one of the world leading tourist attractions? Even if it is possible to explain away the effects and mitigate any consequences by "industry" or "Australian standards" why would you take the risk of destroying something so incredible?
- Buffering zones – what are these and how do they work? Have there ever been cases where industrial buffering zones have failed? What is the risk to the residents of South End, Gladstone and the flora and fauna of Curtis Is? How do we know that these will be suitable and acceptable?
- Light Pollution - How will the light emissions from the industry affect the fauna? What light pollution will have to be endured by the residents of South End?
- Noise pollution - What detail is there available on the level of noise pollution during the construction phase, and after the industry is up and running? Will this be a continual emission? Does the industry propose to operate around the clock?
- Waste – what waste is generated by the industry and how is this dealt with?
- Increased shipping in the region – you only have to spend time walking the foreshores of Curtis Island to get a first hand insight into the quantity of rubbish that is dumped by the cargo ships. How can you guarantee that increasing the number of ships in the area will not increase the amount of environmentally damaging rubbish accumulating in our water ways and on our beaches?
- How can you argue for the sustaining influence of State Parks, Forests and Conservation Areas on Curtis, which aim to balance and promote the responsible community use of the Curtis protected areas for various activities and ensuring similar opportunities are available for future generations to enjoy when you have large scale industry right next door? Is this ecologically sustainable thinking? Regardless of what safeguards may be envisaged the fact is, and you only need look around the Gladstone region and existing industry to realise that large scale industry does and will have a negative impact on the environment. The quality of air, the quality of water I have certainly noticed deteriorate over the last two decades.
- What of culturally significant aboriginal sites on the island? If these are present how does the development of large scale industry in the region protect these?
- Ten major environments have been defined for the island and this formed the basis for the submission to the commonwealth by the Old Forestry Department for Assistance with Extending the National Parks. Curtis Island does have a significant ecological significance, this cannot be disputed. Why would the Government then risk such a significant environment by the construction and operation of heavy industry with in it?
- A report submitted to the National Land & Water Resources Office in Sept 2001 on Queensland River Conditions by a panel of experts assessed the Curtis basin a having limited disturbance and land use pressure, the hydrology and water quality assessed as near pristine condition. What safeguards and guarantees can be given that the opening up of Curtis for large scale industry will not have a detrimental affect on this status?
- What safeguards and guarantees can be given to protect the biodiversity of Curtis? Whilst I admit that the biodiversity is not static and is constantly changing by genetic and evolutionary processes, what guarantees can be given that the extension of industry into this area will not lead to a reduction in natural habitat, habitat degradation, species population decline and extinction?

- Regardless of studies undertaken now and forward contemplation, how can the impact of industry on the significant ecological Island of Curtis and its micro and macro ecosystems be fully comprehended until it is too late?
- To allow industry to develop on Curtis Island I believe is to jeopardise one of Central Queensland's best assets. Surely an alternative site is available without the risks of degradation or destruction of such a diverse and significant ecological asset.
- Permitting the extension of industry into and on Curtis Island would be an act of negligence on behalf of the Government.

Conclusion

In closing this submission you will have read what it was like for me growing up on Curtis Island and how scared this island is to me and my family, my extended family and friends of my family, how we enjoy the natural beauty and diversity of flora and fauna each and every day we are lucky enough be at South End. My real concern, and the concern of my family is, will Curtis Island remain in its current state and be able to be cherished and enjoyed by our children and our children's children in the same way that we did?

I would strongly suggest that Curtis Islands Cultural Heritage is its natural beauty and current state, that is **without** industry.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any queries in relation to the above.

Yours Faithfully

Jason Bonney
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