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I am deeply concerned at the adequacy and motivation of the Australian and Queensland Governments' efforts to stop the rapid decline of the Great Barrier Reef. As Australians we are the custodians of one of the natural wonders of the world. We have a moral, ethical and legal obligation to protect this wonder for our children and future generations of Australians and citizens of the world.

This natural asset contributes to both the Queensland and the Australian economies. I fail to understand why the mineral and resources industry can be allowed to jeopardise other industries that rely on the Great Barrier Reef. The mining and resources industry are not the only 'players' in this debate and yet our community and others do not get to hear any other voices. Tourism is a multi-billion dollar industry and it relies on a healthy reef that has a pristine environment to offer tourists. Both governments seem willing to jeopardise the tourism industry by only considering what the mining and resources industry and port corporations want. This is because both the State and Federal government have vested interests in both.

I don't believe that there has been any proper or adequate consultation with affected industries such as tourism companies and organisations, nor has the views of relevant scientific experts been considered, and there has been no consultation with local communities on these issues. In Cairns there has been no prominent information made available to our local community about what is actually being proposed in Cairns or indeed right down the coast of Queensland. Our local media is biased towards big business and the mining and resources industry. This is such an important issue which can affect so many industries and local jobs in our Cairns community but it hasn't even made the front page of the Cairns Post. Locals are drip fed only what the State government and the Cairns Ports Authority want you to hear.

I note that the Cairns Ports Authority is a State owned corporation. Local Members for Parliament are pro-dredging, pro-development and pro-industrialisation along our North Queensland coastline. You won't find one Member of Parliament talking to our community about where to find balanced and unbiased information on these significant issues for our region. Our region is all about our natural environment. It is where the World Heritage Great Barrier Reef meets the World Heritage Wet Tropics. People come to Cairns from all over the world to enjoy this unique natural beauty and yet our Members of Parliament do not support the tourism industry in this debate nor do they ever side with adequately protecting our natural environment in the face of such development and expansion. There have been no public consultations in Cairns that I have seen advertised or been able to participate in to share my views as a concerned local member of my community. Tourism is vital to the economy along the reef coast and thousands of livelihoods are threatened when the reef ecosystem is put at risk.

What concerns me is not only the dredging of the Trinity Inlet in Cairns, and the expansion and development all along the Queensland coast, but the fact that it is all happening concurrently. It is not incremental development or expansion but a massive onslaught of development and expansion planned along the Queensland coast in a very short period of time. This can only be catastrophic to the Great Barrier Reef over the next few years if both governments continue to cut 'green tape', speed up environmental approval processes, act only in their vested interests and not for the community, and continue on a path of such rapid and rampant development.

The proposed expansions are in at least four of the 12 Queensland ports along the coastline of the Great Barrier Reef including, dredge channels and land based development. Proposals include a major expansion of the coal export infrastructure at Abbot Point, new port facilities at Dudgeon Point. The Port of Townsville is expanding with proposed 100 hectare reclamation to accommodate six additional berths and there is the proposed dredging of the Trinity Inlet in Cairns to enable mega ships to enter the port of Cairns. Three proposals for the development of new

ports on previously undeveloped sites at Wongai (Bathurst Bay, Cape York, Fitzroy Terminal (in the vicinity of Port Alma) and Balaclava Island (near Curtis Island). The construction of the world's largest LNG Terminal in Gladstone with a second shipping channel is in the works.

Governments and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) under-estimate the amount of dredge spoil which will be dumped as a result of a go ahead for these proposals. The total amount is likely to be in excess of 60 million cubic metres and as much as 100 million cubic metres. I ask the Senate why the Queensland and Australian governments, who have the moral and legal obligation to protect the Great Barrier Reef for future generations, are allowed to treat this wonder of the natural world as a waste dump site! Dredge spoil is a waste product. I am disgusted that both governments believe that there is nothing wrong with dumping this onto the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and claiming that it will have absolutely no effect on the Great Barrier Reef and marine life at all.

Dredging, and dumping of dredge spoil, produces suspended sediment plumes which can travel large distances in ocean currents. In a delicate ecosystem like the Great Barrier Reef, the impact of water turbidity is devastating. The living coral reef relies on sunlight to survive, as do the seagrass beds which are habitat for fish, dugong and turtles. The physical impacts of dredging, shipping and the associated noise has caused many dugong and turtle deaths, as seen in Gladstone shortly after dredging began. I understand that the fishing industry in this region is now destroyed and that fish have been caught diseased and dying or found dead.

Dredging activities are likely to have both indirect and direct impacts. Potential impacts to the Great Barrier Marine Park if dredging activities are allowed to go ahead are likely to be sediment plumes resulting from disposal activities, coral bleaching from reduced light infiltration as a result of sediment plumes, reduced food for marine fauna, loss of localised biodiversity due to turbidity, death from dredging, sedimentation of habitat from dredging leading to dieback of seagrass and other habitats and degradation to potential preferred habitat from sediment plumes.

Cairns' Trinity Inlet is one of the major dredging projects earmarked by the Queensland Government along the reef coast. The aim for Ports North, the Cairns port authority, is to increase the capacity of the existing port, which caters mainly for cruise ships and sugar exports. The primary reason touted in the Cairns Post is that by dredging it will allow larger cruise liners to enter and the claim is that this will provide huge economic benefits to the city. Cairns is already able to have mega ships dock off of Yorkey's Knob on the Northern beaches but instead they are pushing to dredge the inlet to enable the mega ships into the port of Cairns presumably so Ports North can increase profits and the State government coffers. I understand that 5 million cubic metres will be dredged to expand the shipping channel into Trinity Inlet, with sea disposal of the waste proposed. To put the figure in perspective, 3 million cubic metres will be dredged at the controversial Abbot Point development.

This major dredging operation will jeopardize the health of the marine ecosystems that many of our tourists come to Cairns to see. A healthy reef is fundamental to a healthy tourism economy. Any risks to reef health should not be taken lightly. Given the proximity of Trinity Inlet to the Great Barrier Reef, and its value to the tourism industry, the risks are too high. Of particular concern are the impacts on marine life such as dugongs and turtles. The release of potentially contaminated sediment into the greater Trinity environment and subsequent impact on recreational fishing and changes in the movement of tides and currents is unacceptable. Trinity Inlet represents the largest area of seagrass between Hinchinbrook and Cooktown and is a critical nursery habitat and feeding habitats for dugong, green sea turtle and wading bird populations. Both governments play down the significance of these areas but it is these places like our mangroves, these inland river systems and habitats which sustain life on the reefs. Through dredging, development and degradation of these crucial habitats and systems you will gradually impact and destroy the Great Barrier Reef.

I do not believe that the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) has acted in accordance with their legislation. They are an organisation that is supposed to protect the Great Barrier Marine Park. Instead they are approving dredging and developments that will see the dumping of millions of tonnes of waste onto a protected World Heritage site. The science on the effects of dredging is not firm nor is it settled. Indeed over 200 scientists wrote an open letter to GBRMPA outlining their concerns and expert opinions on the negative impacts of dredging, development and port expansions. The GBRMPA did not adhere to the precautionary principle at all in approving the Abbott Point development. It went ahead and approved a project where there is an enormous amount of doubt and risk as to what the actual impacts may be on dumping dredge spoil on the Great Barrier Reef. These governments and the GBRMPA should only be making decisions based on facts and where the science is firm and there is no doubt. The fact that this is one of the wonders of the World and both governments have made decisions without adhering to the precautionary principle is deeply troubling, dangerous and shows a total disregard for the significance of the Great Barrier Reef. The Queensland and Australian governments and the GBRMPA do not appear to have the best interests of the Great Barrier Reef in their minds or hearts as decisions are being made and appear to be putting big business and the minerals and resources industry before any other industry, any community or anything else.

It is becoming clear that decisions on areas of environmental significance are being made without proper consultation with local communities or broader communities that are impacted by these decisions. The air we breathe, the water we use and drink, the landscapes and environments we live in and share, matters to all of us. What happens to these places will affect everyone. Governments with vested interests cannot be allowed to make decisions without adequately and properly consulting with local and broader communities that may be impacted by decisions of governments. This includes genuine consultation with all communities and local industries, providing balanced and unbiased information on both sides of an issue, transparency, using independent scientific research and facts to support any decision making and genuine consideration of the broader community's views in all final decisions. Any decisions made by governments must be able to be reviewed or appealed. Those who oppose such developments and expansions should not be spied on by governments nor should they be called 'greenies' or indeed 'environmental terrorists'. Many of these people are concerned parents, families and people in communities who do not share the same vision or ideologies as those in power. In a democracy we still have the right to voice an opinion that differs from the governments and to protest and speak out.

There are many developments and proposals that are being floated in Cairns that are deeply concerning to many residents. These developments and proposals will impact on our natural environment, the Great Barrier Reef, the Wet Tropics and our way of life. Here in Cairns we have been lucky that rampant ugly development has not destroyed our beautiful coastline like other places such as the Gold Coast in the South East. But even Cairns may see an explosion of development along our coastline soon. Our environmental protections and city planning which has to date protected our unique and beautiful tropical lifestyle is about to crumble with the proposed Aquis Resort being pushed through the approval processes by both governments. Sky scrapers and mini city are being proposed to sit on the northern beach of Yorkey's Knob in Cairns. Once the precedent of approving skyscrapers on our northern beaches goes ahead, developers will be lining up to build high rise developments up and down our coast line. Local communities, protected habitats and a way of life are at risk because of this proposed development which sits on the beach and next to the Great Barrier Reef. Governments and developers don't seem to care that this type of development is not sustainable, is not sensitive to our environment, does not suit our tropical lifestyle and climate and will negatively affect our way of life in Cairns.

There are alternative ways of building and development that complements our environment and is sustainable. There are also creative solutions to issues in our regions. Unfortunately local, State

and Federal governments are unwilling to consult with our community or put on the table more than simply one way of doing something. For Cairns the solutions to enabling the 'mega' ships to enter Cairns and grow the economy can be found other than in dredging. If dredging takes place it has to occur every year and at the cost of millions of dollars. As a city that promotes itself as where the rainforest meets the reef and where eco and adventure tourism are the major drawcard for tourists in our region why can't Ports North build a significant jetty that will allow mega ships to dock in Cairns. It could even have a light rail or tram or bus to bring tourists into the center of the city of Cairns. This would be a significant selling point to tourists on how Cairns didn't choose to destroy the Trinity Inlet and degrade and destroy the environment and the reef but instead chose a green alternative to dredging in order to protect one of the wonders of the world on its doorstep.

We need to be protecting more areas of our coastline from development and expansion for future generations. Life can not only be about profits and nothing else. At least this is what we tell our two boys and I hope that their love for Cairns, our region and the environment continues to grow from the seeds that we planted in them both. I ask myself is further protecting what significant environmental areas are left even possible today with our current governments who are so eager to get rid of the 'green tape', remove environmental protections, develop resorts in national parks and are attempting to remove environmentally significant areas from World Heritage classification in Australia. I fear that one day both of these governments will seek to remove the World Heritage listing for the Great Barrier Reef so they can further develop and mine these areas in the future for profits. There must be places in this world that are able to remain truly wild and free from human impacts and that are able to preserve biodiversity and to let it flourish and grow. My two young boys are able to grasp this concept at the ages of five and eight and so I fail to understand why both governments cannot. There are places of such beauty and significance that they must be protected against development, degradation and destruction merely for profits. The Great Barrier Reef is one of these special places. I sincerely hope that the Australian Parliament and our local communities will rise to the challenge before them and adequately protect the Great Barrier Reef and our coastline in Queensland for future generations.