



114 Boundary Street  
Railway Estate, Townsville  
Qld, 4810  
PO Box 364, Townsville  
Ph: 61 07 47716226  
0428 987 535  
[office@nqcc.org.au](mailto:office@nqcc.org.au)  
[www.nqcc.org.au](http://www.nqcc.org.au)

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **FOI documents question modelling and monitoring for dredging and dumping for Qld ports**

New FOI documents reveal that the conclusions from modelling of deep ocean currents published by GBRMPA in 2013<sup>1</sup>, were fiercely disputed by the Queensland Ports Association (QPA) because the results called into question all previous port modelling and monitoring, North Queensland Conservation Council (NQCC) said today.

“The new FOI documents show that experts raised serious doubts about the modelling and monitoring undertaken by Port Authorities, calling into question claims made by the ports that dredging, dumping and expansion have few if any impacts,” said NQCC spokesperson Jeremy Tager.

“It’s extraordinary that, in decades of modelling, the impact of ocean currents on sediment movement has never been considered. It’s clear that the modelling done by state-owned ports is likely to have been inaccurate for years, meaning the impacts of dredging and dumping may be underestimated or completely missed. This faulty information has been relied upon by decision makers in approving dredging and dumping projects.”

The experts identified in these documents also challenged the accuracy of the monitoring, the location of monitoring sites, the lack of long term monitoring and the failure to monitor in areas where we now know sediment moves.

“These are disturbing failures and unfortunately Port Authorities have responded by disputing the evidence rather than re-examining their work.

“When this modelling report was released last year we learned that dredge plumes travel further than previously understood, and sometimes in directions not predicted by port modelling. But now we learn that

sediments are resuspended more frequently and for longer periods, well outside the boundaries of where monitoring has occurred", said Tager.

"Other documents recently acquired by NQCC support this finding. In March this year, GBRMPA told the Minister for the Environment that the 2006 dredging campaign at Hay Point had resulted in a much larger plume than had been anticipated, water quality trigger levels had been exceeded on multiple occasions and significant damage to coral had occurred. In their application for the current Abbot Point expansion, the proponents had used the 2006 Hay Point dredging campaign as an example of a 'highly successful' campaign, with 'minimal environmental impact'.

"And if further evidence of cause for concern were needed, there is that from Gladstone, where the dredge plume differed radically from what was anticipated from the modelling.

"Faced with the prospect of an additional 165 million cubic metres of dredging proposed for the Great Barrier Reef coast, it is vital that the real impacts of dredging and dumping are accurately and fully understood. "It's clear that a complete and independent audit of the predictive accuracy of current port models and the accuracy of monitoring is called for – before there are any further approvals for dredging and dumping" Mr Tager concluded.

**Media contact: Jeremy Tager 02 6679 5888; 0400 376 974**

**Note:** NQCC acknowledges the limitations, assumptions and constraints of the SKM deep ocean modelling that was undertaken. However, none of those limitations change the broad conclusions outlined above.

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<sup>i</sup> *Improved Dredge Material Management for the Great Barrier Reef Region, Appendices E, F. SKM 2013*