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MEDIA RELEASE

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NQCC echoes calls for better GBR management and assessment

A call for better state government management of Great Barrier Reef islands was today echoed by North Queensland Conservation Council (NQCC).

The call came in the lead-up to the election from current and former academics at JCU, who also described the environmental impact assessment process as 'token' and the assessment of cumulative impacts as 'primitive'.¹

'Here in Townsville, we have World Heritage Magnetic Island on our doorstep. It boasts numerous, uniquely expressed World Heritage values yet it is managed by-and-large as just another suburb of Townsville. The state needs to ensure that there are sufficient resources to manage the island's environment and that special standards are applied. At present we have largely uncontrolled development of the lowlands, poor control of runoff, inadequate domestic animal control and massive dredging damaging the fringing reefs' said NQCC Coordinator Wendy Tubman.

'And with the proposal to dredge 9.9 million cubic metres of seabed in Cleveland Bay to expand the Port of Townsville, deep concerns about the quality of environmental and cumulative impact assessments are shared by NQCC.

'The Environmental Impact Assessment and the Cumulative Impact Assessment undertaken for the port expansion were amateurish, and typical of many of the assessments done for development applications' said Ms Tubman.

'It is hard to accept the integrity of a process that allows for the complete reversal of findings without substantial new research. At Abbot Point, for example, dumping in the nationally significant GBR wetlands at Caley Valley, previously declared by the state to be the worst option, has now, miraculously and with little new evidence, become the best option. It is very fishy.

'Flimsy assessments for the sake of streamlining and fast-tracking of development proposals cannot be condoned. This is especially the case when it comes to the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, the condition of which has been described by the GBR Marine Park Authority as poor, declining and expected to worsen.

'NQCC calls on all candidates standing for election to commit to more genuine and more substantial efforts to protect the Reef' Ms Tubman said.

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¹ <http://theconversation.com/six-things-queenslands-next-government-must-do-to-save-the-great-barrier-reef-36258>