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MEDIA RELEASE

NQCC DISPUTES ABBOT POINT APPROVAL PROCEDURE

North Queensland Conservation Council today expressed great misgiving about the way in which the approval for Hancock Coal's terminal at Abbot Point (T3) appears to have been pushed through prior to all relevant information being considered.

"We understand that there are major differences between the environmental importance of the site as it was described to the Minister by the proponent, Hancock, and the importance found in surveys undertaken for Hancock and others for a Cumulative Impact Assessment", said Wendy Tubman, Coordinator of North Queensland Conservation Council.

'The Minister makes much of the fact that the approval was given with 60 conditions. However, when the conditions include such things as 'pre-clearance surveys', one is left wondering why these were not done *before* approval was given, as input into the approval decision-making process, rather than after.

'We are also concerned by such things as the proponent being allowed to destroy areas of seagrass, as long as they 'work with the Queensland Government to identify opportunities to protect and conserve seagrass, the vital asset that protects threatened species including dolphins, marine turtles and dugongs'. Why allow assets 'vital' to protected species to be damaged in the first place, Ms Tubman queried.

'The community is painfully aware, through UNESCO's threat to reclassify the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area as 'in danger', through AIMS finding of the massive loss of coral cover over recent years, and through JCU models showing the spread of coal dust on the outer reef, that the Great Barrier Reef is under extreme pressure from coastal development, in particular that associated with the reckless drive to mine and export coal. We call on Tony Burke to reconsider his approval.'

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