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MEDIA RELEASE

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State pre-empts Townsville Port public assessment process

In a move that would appear to pre-empt the ongoing environmental impact assessment of the proposed expansion of the Port of Townsville, the State Government has listed Townsville port as one of five Priority Port Development Areas.

In relation to the Port of Townsville, the Draft Queensland Ports Strategy states ‘The government will facilitate staged, incremental expansion of port and terminal capacity... to meet emerging demand in line with long-term plans’.

“The release of this report now is a demonstration of the ‘growth at any cost’ approach of this government and of its contempt for the public Environmental Impact Statement consultation process” said North Queensland Conservation Council Coordinator Wendy Tubman.

“More worrying yet is the continuation in the report of the argument for State take-over of Federal powers to assess development proposals. If this devolution of powers from the Commonwealth to the State goes ahead we would be in the situation of a pro-port-development government, making decision about development of a state-owned port without any checks and balances.

“Even the power of the State Department of Environment and Heritage Protection has been usurped, with decisions about the proposed port expansion being made by the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning. The conflicts of interest are blatant and the ramifications horrendous.

“When the Port of Townsville was established in 1884, it was ideal for the small ships that plied largely local waters. But the port is in a very shallow bay which has high biodiversity and social values – it is just not suitable for mega-ships.

“Furthermore, there is no evidence of demand for the proposed port expansion, a fact that even our local member of government has acknowledged.”

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