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MEDIA RELEASE

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NQCC welcomes WHA dumping ban promise

North Queensland Conservation Council (NQCC) today applauded the Federal opposition's commitment to banning the dumping of dredge spoil in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area if it is elected in 2016.

'This commitment will please tens or even hundreds of thousands of Australian voters who have long made clear their opposition to dumping in the GBR Region' said NQCC coordinator Wendy Tubman.

'It is a sign that the Federal opposition is aware of the importance of the environment to the economy and our lifestyles and is prepared to take effective steps to protect it. Of course, the question of where on land spoil could be dumped would remain important. The current government's proposal to shift the dredge disposal site at Abbot Point from the Marine Park to the Caley Valley Wetlands is not acceptable.

'The current Federal government recently committed to banning dumping in the GBR Marine Park of some types of dredge spoil from some sites, but still left the way open for dumping in the slightly larger WHA.

'Unfortunately, spoil does not recognise a line between the Marine Park and the World Heritage Area, so dumping in one area affects the other' Ms Tubman said.

'We know that dumping in the World Heritage Area damages the Reef, and has a negative impact on our valuable and sustainable tourism and fishing industries.

'However, it would be good to see this initiative in place before 2016 because huge dumping in the World Heritage Area is scheduled to happen before then. In Townsville alone, 5.6 million cubic metres will be added to the regular maintenance dredge spoil that is dumped in the WHA between Cape Cleveland and Magnetic Island if and when the proposed port expansion goes ahead. This could spell the death knell for the already greatly diminished corals and seagrass meadows around tourism-drawcard Magnetic Island' said Ms Tubman.

'A private member's bill could stimulate debate on this issue, and an earlier resolution', she concluded.

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