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MEDIA RELEASE

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New site, same conflict of interest?

By giving public support for a proposal before its own assessments have been done, is the new ALP government heading down the same path of conflict of interest and manipulation of process that characterised the previous government?

This is the question being posed by North Queensland Conservation Council (NQCC) in relation to the agreement between the state and the Indian coal-mining giants Adani and GVK announced yesterday by the Premier. The agreement would see dredge spoil dumped at the abandoned BHP terminal site at Abbot Point, between the Great Barrier Reef lagoon and the nationally listed Caley Valley Wetlands.

‘The Premier and Minister Lynham have made it very clear that they expect this to happen, yet the required state environmental assessments have not yet been done’ NQCC Coordinator Ms Tubman said.

‘The application for the current proposed site should not come from the government. The port at Abbot Point will not be public infrastructure. The application should be lodged by Adani as a multi-user project, as was the case for the rail component of the project, or by GVK, or by a consortium of users. It is essential that the government, as co-assessor, is and is seen to be completely independent and objective when it comes to government environmental assessments.

‘It is totally inappropriate for governments to demonstrate a bias prior to undertaking its assessments. Doing so discourages public servants from being ‘frank and fearless’ in their advice to Ministers and creates deep scepticism about transparency and accountability in the community’.

‘This is exactly the same conflict that was set up between LNP Minister Seeney and assessment staff in the areas under his control when the pop-up idea was to dump in the Caley Valley Wetlands.

‘The new government has jumped too far too quickly in implementing the sensible move away from the Caley Valley Wetland site. It would be appropriate to step back and take a long, cool look at this project in the light of the collapse of the coal industry, the global move away from fossil fuels toward renewables, and the hollowing out of the Queensland economy by mining’ Ms Tubman said.

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