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MEDIA RELEASE

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Wetlands the new scapegoat in bizarre Abbot Point plan

North Queensland Conservation Council (NQCC) has labeled claims that the dumping of dredge spoil in the Caley Valley Wetlands at Abbot Point would increase the tourism potential of the wetlands as 'bizarre'.

'I'm not sure what language Deputy Premier Seeney is speaking when he describes filling in a significant trigger part of the Caley Valley Wetland Protection Area as 'protecting and enhancing the Wetland'" said NQCC Coordinator Wendy Tubman.

'NQCC is concerned that Mr Seeney's proposal, which is a way of avoiding dumping dredge spoil in the Marine Park, would merely transfer damage from one site to another.

'Less than a year ago, land-based disposal options close to but not actually in the wetland were declared by the Department to be environmentally, technically and economically impossible. Now, destroying a vital part of the wetland has become a brilliant solution, albeit one for which there is little evidence in Mr Seeney's proposal.

'In this latest plan, the most permanent part of the wetland would be surrounded on three sides by a four meter high bund wall carrying coal trains, which are expected to run 24/7.

'As if that wasn't enough, Mr Seeney's 'tourist attraction' would lie between the coal loading terminals and the industrial section of the Abbot Point State Development Area (SDA). Potential industries listed for the SDA include an alumina refinery, aluminium smelter, light metals casting plant, calcine carbon (petroleum coke) facility, integrated steel mill, coke plant, ECD plant, ammonium nitrate plant, zinc refinery, copper refinery, cement and lime, LNG facility, coal fired power station, gas fired power station, oil refining, inland coal terminal, bulk minerals resource unloading and stockpiling facility.

'The Caley Valley wetlands are listed as a nationally important wetland and one that, if healthy, provides an important water filtering and fish breeding area for the Great Barrier Reef.

‘The concept appears to have little going for it, but, despite that, it would see the cost of spoil disposal shifted to the community.

‘There appears to be no end to the lengths to which our governments will go to support the coal industry, a dying industry that is the biggest threat to the Great Barrier Reef,’ said Ms Tubman.

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