CAPRICORN CONSERVATION COUNCIL

A voice for the environment

15 April 2013

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia
E: ec.sen@aph.gov.au.

Dear Sir or Madam,

RE: Submission to Senate Enquiry on the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Great Barrier Reef) Bill 2013

The Capricorn Conservation Council (CCC) is a not-for-profit environmental community organisation in Central Queensland (CQ). Established in 1973, we aim to protect the ecological integrity, environmental values and biodiversity of CQ region, and to prevent over-exploitation of our environment. This includes the conservation of marine and coastal ecosystems and species, and the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area in our CQ region (from Baffle Creek to St Lawrence)

CCC fully supports the EPBC Amendment (Great Barrier Reef) Bill 2013 introduced by Senator Waters and welcomes the proposed amendments.

We believe the Bill is essential to ensure the long term protection of marine and coastal ecosystems, habitat and species within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (GBRWHA). The Bill is an important and critical step to implement key recommendations that the World Heritage Committee made in June 2012, within our national environmental law.

CCC has been involved in the protection and conservation of the Reef, islands, estuaries and coastal waters and environments of Central Queensland over many decades and we are extremely concerned about the current health and outlook for the Great Barrier Reef, particularly with the additional pressure of large scale port and industrial development occurring and proposed within or adjacent to the GBRWHA. Within our region, of great concern and focus for our organisation and members has been:

- **Gladstone and Curtis Island** - the on-going environmental degradation and cumulative impacts of industrial expansion in Gladstone harbour and on Curtis Island (i.e. dredging, construction of CSG pipelines and LNG plants, expansion of coal ports, and proposed new coal ports and LNG facilities), and their threat to the envir-onmental values, habitat and world heritage values.

- **Fitzroy Delta, Balaclava Island, northern Curtis Island and Keppel Bay** – the threat of irreversible environ mental impacts to species, ecosystems, habitat and the Outstanding Universal Values of the GBRWHA from thr -ee industrial proposals for coal ports and coal barging. Our organisation opposes any coal port or industrial de -velopment in the Fitzroy Delta and Keppel Bay, Balaclava Island and northern end of Curtis Island.

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Our organisation also met with representatives of IUCN and UNESCO during the WHC Reactive Monitoring Mission in 2012 and supports the recommendations of the WHC and the Mission for greater protection of the Reef from poor water quality, industrial developments and shipping.

CCC therefore welcomes the proposed amendments to the EPBC Act as the Bill reiterates what we, as an organisation, have been suggesting and requesting in our various submissions to Environmental Impact Statements, EPBC referrals and submissions at the State and Federal level.

Within the Bill, we support:

We fully support banning new port developments at Port Alma, Balaclava Island, and the northern section of Curtis Island (as identified in the Bill, which is from Grahams Creek northwards), and the entire northern section of the Great Barrier Reef.

We particularly support a ban on any new port development outside of the existing and long established major port areas. We do not consider Port Alma to be a major port and therefore should not be expanded.

We fully support a moratorium on any expansion until the Strategic assessment is completed and the ability to assess both the individual and cumulative impacts of all projects is possible.

We also support the view that unless further developments provide a net benefit to the Reef, they should not proceed.

Our organisation has prepared numerous submissions to various government and industry processes around plans to allow further development along the GBR coast line. In these submissions we have reiterated our concerns about specific developments, which we consider are not appropriate to proceed and which will have unacceptable environmental impacts on the GBR. We also raise concerns about the government processes which are meant to ensure the protection of the Reef but which instead support fast tracking, inadequate assessment processes and poor accountability.

A range of these submissions are provided as supporting documentation to highlight the nature of the concerns our organisation holds, why the current EPBC Act is insufficient to ensure the protection of the Reef's outstanding universal values and why we support the strengthening of the EPBC Act through these proposed amendments.

Yours sincerely,

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