

PROTECT KEPPEL BAY

The Keppel and Fitzroy Delta Alliance (KAFDA) fully supports the amendment to the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* to prevent the Commonwealth from delegating the approval of proposed actions covered by bilateral agreements to a state or territory.

The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* is the foremost piece of environmental protection legislation in Australia. Since its establishment, it has been used to override numerous state government decisions that had the potential to cause considerable environmental harm, thereby protecting areas of national environmental significance for the benefit of future generations.

Who is KAFDA?

KAFDA is a Central Queensland not for profit, community alliance with a broad base of representation that includes thousands of supporters from different backgrounds. It is committed to protecting the Fitzroy River Delta and all associated waters flowing into the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park/World Heritage Area from any further industrial port development.

While KAFDA acknowledges the current resources boom and its place in the Australian economy, it also recognises the importance of the Fitzroy River Delta which feeds into Keppel bay and the southern Great Barrier Reef as the most significant estuarine system, fed by the largest river catchment on the east coast of Australia, and being critical to the health and functionality of the Great Barrier Reef.

Rationale for KAFDA's Support

A local example of why KAFDA supports this bill is because the Fitzroy Delta is currently under severe threat from several proposed port developments that have been publicly endorsed by the Queensland State government. Further, the majority of all port development is linked to state-government owned port corporations. The Queensland government believes these developments are essential to Queensland's economy, but does not understand – or chooses to ignore – the outstanding significance of the Fitzroy Delta to the Great Barrier Reef which is a Matter of National Significance. The public endorsement of these projects from the Queensland State government comes before the Environmental Impact Statements for the specific proposals have been submitted. This shows a lack of understanding of the importance of the environment and therefore brings into question the trustworthiness of the government with sole environmental protection of significant areas.

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If the EPBC Act powers were to be handed over to the states, the Queensland State government would have the final approval for port developments in the Fitzroy Delta, a decision that would have disastrous consequences for the biodiversity and ecosystems of the area because of their government's known support for the proposed projects. The Commonwealth government needs to retain the power to act as a check and balance on developments that impact Matters of National Significance.

More broadly, state governments by their fundamental nature are concerned only with the welfare of the state, not the wider nation and Commonwealth obligations under international conventions such as World Heritage and Ramsar. Therefore, this is not the level of government most suited to protecting matters of national significance. KAFDA believe that having the Commonwealth retain the powers of the EPBC Act to have the ultimate decision making powers on issues of national significance is of the utmost importance. Therefore, KAFDA fully supports this amendment to the EPBC Act.