



# THE FIGHT FOR THE REEF GOES TO CANBERRA

*There's a lot happening as the battle to ensure the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area is not down-listed because of the absolute failure and refusal of the Federal and State governments to ensure the protection of this precious, irreplaceable heritage goes into full swing*

Over the Christmas/New Year break, Dr Matt Landos, the veterinary scientist who has carefully researched and carried out many field studies on fish and other aquatic animals at Gladstone Harbour released his third in depth study. The study was funded by the public through the Gladstone Fishing Research Fund with a huge slice of Matt's own funds included. AFA was also a contributor to this important report.

His 171 page research document is a devastating revelation of the complete failure of both governments to address the very serious mortality, sickness and deliberate destruction of the marine ecosystem of Gladstone Harbour and beyond. At the same time, a US biochemist and toxic expert that AFA brought to Australia to do research at Gladstone also finalised her report which documents the failure of governments to do proper testing and to adequately analyse the many problems.

These reports are extremely important. Both

these scientists are expert in their fields. In spite of both reports being circulated widely in the mainstream media, not one word has come out save in the local Gladstone paper.

This degree of censorship will give readers some idea of the enormous efforts being made by the mainstream media and its political allies to ensure Australians are NEVER made aware of how serious the situation is at Gladstone and in the World Heritage Area. To suppress the information and research in these reports is bordering on criminal.

Minister Tony Burke is utterly dedicated to the spin that the floodwaters which occurred two years ago are the cause of mortality, sickness, disease, and loss of scallops, prawns, oysters in the traditional Harbour fishing grounds. Yet not one single study commissioned by the Queensland government or Gladstone Ports Corporation has included damage by dredging in its terms of reference.

If you're wondering about

**THE SCALE OF DREDGING!**  
IN GLADSTONE AND THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

**58 MILLION M<sup>3</sup>** OF SEABED TO BE DREDGED!  
ENOUGH TO FILL 34 MCG SIZED STADIUMS!

MELBOURNE CRICKET GROUND = 1.7 MILLION M<sup>3</sup>

If the Federal Government approves a second shipping channel in Gladstone Harbour, which will use another 12 million cubic metres of seabed dredged, the total amount of dredge will be 58 million M<sup>3</sup>

**16 MILLION M<sup>3</sup>** OF SEABED HAS ALREADY BEEN... DREDGED!  
Enough to fill 6440 olympic size pools

**46 MILLION M<sup>3</sup>** OF SEABED HAS BEEN APPROVED FOR DREDGING!  
ENOUGH TO FILL 172 SUPERTANKERS

Q-MAX SOURCE - WIKIPEDIA = 266,000 M<sup>3</sup> • STADIUM SOURCE - WWW.MCG.ORG.AU = 1.7 MILLION M<sup>3</sup> • OLYMPIC POOL SIZE - WWW.EHOW.COM = 2500 M<sup>3</sup>

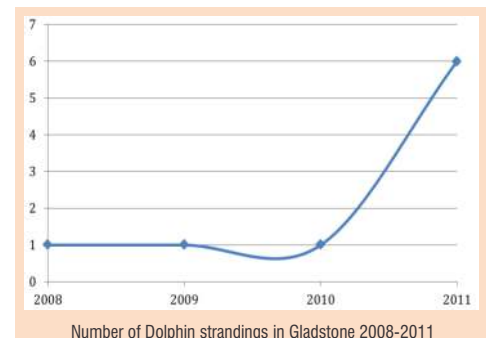
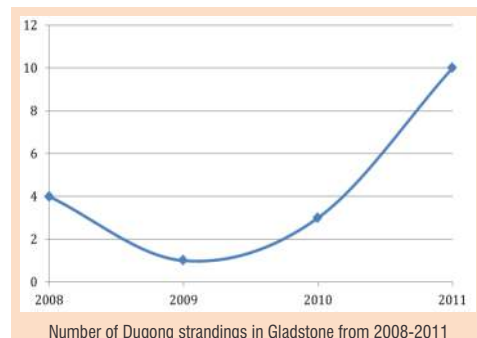
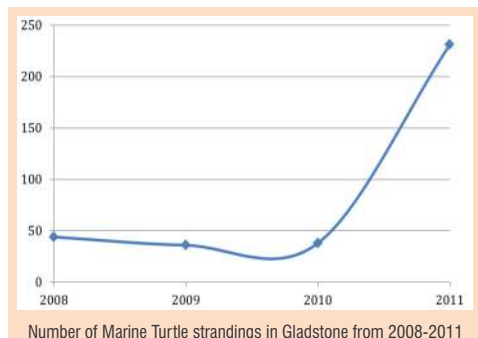
[WWW.GREATBARRIERREEF.ORG.AU](http://WWW.GREATBARRIERREEF.ORG.AU)

the scale of dredging, take a look at the diagram our wonderful webmaster and graphic artist has created.

The commercial fishermen who have lost their livelihoods and future are ignored. The dead dugongs and turtles, dolphins and other wondrous sea creatures – ignored. A haven for these creatures – destroyed. And the damage is in its infancy with a second shipping channel in Gladstone Harbour making its way through the Queensland

and Federal legal system. Recently published Queensland Government records only go to 2010. No surprise there.

Much better to avoid the years when dredging of Gladstone Harbour and other areas further up the coast caused major mortality in dugongs and turtles. But we have the monthly marine stranding reports and they demonstrate what's really happening in Gladstone.



# THE FIGHT FOR THE REEF GOES TO CANBERRA (Cont'd)

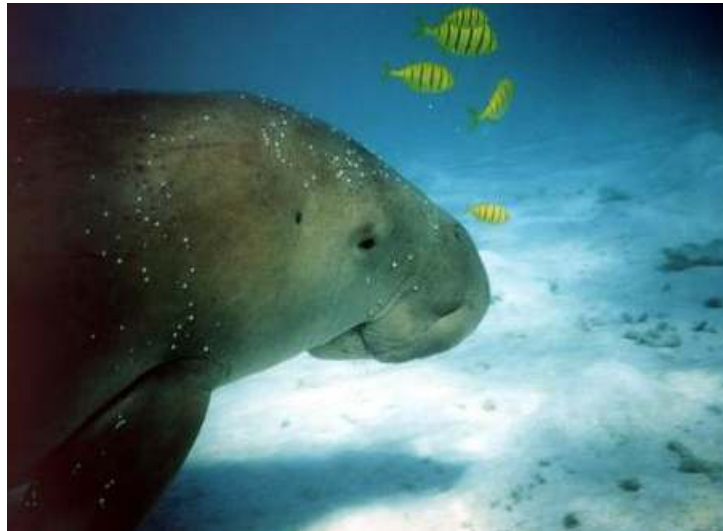
A report released late last year by Dr Helene Marsh, James Cook University, an expert on dugongs indicated that Townsville and Gladstone were "hot spots" for the animals and that the government needed to pay urgent attention to the impacts to seagrass (turtle and dugong prey) as a result of massive dredging. The study has been ignored by governments.

**Here is an excerpt from the referral document Gladstone Ports Corporation (GPC) submitted to the Federal Government which relates specifically to dredging.**

This document was submitted as part of the process of obtaining approval for a second shipping channel.

GPC in the referral document under Nature and extent of likely impact of dredging:-

*death from dredging and piling operation sedimentation of habitat from dredging leading to dieback of seagrass and other benthic habitats potential noise impacts associated with dredging, piling and blasting activities a reduction in food resources as a result of*



*sediment plumes from dredging degradation to potential preferred habitat from sediment plumes*

*The dredge footprint is located with the GBRWHA and the offshore disposal site may be located within GRMP with dredging activities likely to have both indirect and direct impacts.*

And further under Great Barrier Reef Marine Park:-

*Potential impacts to the GBRMP that may occur as a result of channel duplication works include:-*

*Eutrophication as a result of potential sediment plumes resulting from disposal activities coral bleaching and reduction of benthic assemblages due to reduced light infiltration as a result of sediment*

*plumes.*

*Reduced food for marine fauna Subsequent loss of localised biodiversity as a result of increased turbidity during works.*

So we have a situation where a proposed plan to cut a second channel by GPC acknowledges major impacts.

Governments' failure to examine the consequences of current dredging activity and the potential consequences is astonishing given the details listed in GPC's own document. Yet GPC and the same governments have gone to great lengths to ensure that dredging impacts are removed from any terms of reference of any studies.

Nor has there been any effort to document the impacts of noise or the loss of foraging habitat.

AFA notes the following comments from Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority chairman Russell Reichelt who told ABC TV's Four Corners on 7<sup>th</sup> September, 2011 he warned the Federal Government that huge dredging operations aimed at servicing Queensland's growing coal seam gas industry posed an unacceptable risk to marine life on the reef.

Mr Reichelt says the

authority expressed extreme concerns to the Federal Government about the development of a liquefied natural gas hub and the associated dredging operation at Curtis Island, off Gladstone.

*"It is the largest dredging operation ever undertaken in the World Heritage area, and part of the spoil will be taken out to sea to a dump site within one kilometre of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.*

*Marine life is already under enormous stress in the area from this year's floods and Cyclone Yasi, which have caused a record number of dugong and turtle strandings as well as significant damage to seagrass beds.*

*Our concerns filled many pages - and were related to any potential spill over into the marine park of dredging activity, the impact on migratory species, humpback dolphin, indo-pacifics and snubfin dolphins."*

Mr Reichelt says he provided written evidence to the government that the scale of dredging associated with the building of four coal seam gas processing plants on Curtis Island would have an unacceptable impact on marine life.

*"Our advice was to raise extreme concerns with it," Mr Reichelt said.*

In an attempt to allay these concerns, Environment Minister Tony Burke imposed guidelines to ensure water quality and protect marine life.

Mr Reichelt then agreed with the decision to go ahead.

None of the guidelines "imposed" by Environment Minister Tony Burke have been implemented and there is no protection of marine life or water quality.

**Indeed Gladstone Harbour looks like soup.**

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Perhaps Mr Reichelt was persuaded by the money offered by mining companies. At Senate Estimates Hearing last year, Greens Senator Larissa Waters asked Mr Reichelt about the recent approval of Abbots Point - Alpha Coal Project, principal proponents Gina Hancock and a huge Indian conglomerate (Abbots Point development is apparently known as T3—another disastrous development on Queensland coast which includes massive dredging)



**Senator WATERS:**

Yes. My understanding, as part of those conditions of approval of T3, is that GBRMPA will receive in the order of \$600,000 each year from the proponent.

**Dr Reichelt:**

I think that is the order of the amount. It sounds slightly high but it is in that order.

**Senator WATERS:**

Is this a trend? Are there other payments such as this that proponents make to GBRMPA as part of their approval conditions?

**Dr Reichelt:**

Those offsets arose from negotiations by the department. I think the government has just published an offsets policy. To say it is a trend, I do not know. This is the second round after Gladstone. I think I have to hand the 'Is it

going to continue?' to the department, although that for future decision of the minister.

**Senator WATERS:**

Perhaps you could respond as to whether this is the first instance in which GBRMPA will receive funds from a proponent?

**Dr Reichelt:**

No. There were allocations in the liquid natural gas conditions

**Senator WATERS:**

Could you take those on notice and provide the details of those contributions to date, including any information, if you have it, as to whether that is expected in future, just from your knowledge base?

**Dr Reichelt:**

Yes, I am happy to take that on notice.

**Senator WATERS:**

Do you agree that there is a risk of GBRMPA becoming reliant on funding from such sources that might in fact put the reef itself at risk?

**Senator Conroy:**

That was asking for an opinion of the officer.

**Senator WATERS:**

I will try my best. Have you advised the department that you believe there might be any risk from GBRMPA being in receipt of such funds from proponents?

**Dr Reichelt:**

That kind of discussion has not occurred in the sense of me advising the department. In terms of funding for a particular purpose, in addition to our core funding my object as the manager would be to avoid any diminution of protection efforts from the appropriation funding.

It's important to realize that OFFSETS are supposed to be the protection of other similar areas as a condition of destroying precious environment. Money can never replace ecosystems.

# CANBERRA

## THE HALLS OF POWER

**AFA'S Co-ordinator Sue Arnold and Dr Matt Landos will be having important meetings at Parliament House in Canberra in the second week of February.**



development is a template for the rest of the resource industry development around the entire Australian coastline.

Australians who care about the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area would do well to support AFA in this effort to lobby for a moratorium on dredging so that a proper independent review can be undertaken.

And you might just ask the big environmental groups exactly what they're doing about the Reef which surely must be the most important Heritage listing in this ancient land.

Please give all the help you can. AFA has the support of many scientists and we're uncovering massive scandals and evidence which is going straight to UNESCO World Heritage Secretariat.

**Let's save the Reef, Sue Arnold & Friends.**

With the help of local Federal MP Janelle Saffin, Sue and Matt have meetings organised with senior staffers from Minister Burke's office, the Shadow Minister for the Environment, Greg Hunt MP, Greens Senator Larissa Waters with the possibility that Sen. Christine Milne, Greens Leader will sit in on the meeting. They also have a meeting with Tony Abbot's senior advisor. As well, Sen. Doug Cameron's senior staffer on the environment will be at the meeting with Janelle Saffin.

The lobbying trip has also been supported by GetUp who have used their political influence to ensure that both Sue and Matt are able to get concerns to the highest level.

Two days of heavy lobbying, providing research and evidence of the Gladstone nightmare. This massive LNG

*Every Day - Earth Day*



*This is my simple religion,  
There is no need for temples;  
no need for  
complicated philosophy.  
Our own brain, our own heart  
is our temple,  
the philosophy is kindness.*

**Dalai Lama**

Photo Samantha Hic SW  
New Providence Bahamas

# PANEL MEMBER SPEAKS OUT (ALTHOUGH OFF THE RECORD)

*According to the conditions of approval set down by the Federal Government, an expert panel to establish and monitor the development will be set up.*

The Ecosystem Research and Monitoring Program (ERMP) Panel monitors actual and potential impacts on the environment arising from all project activities to examine the short, medium and long-term impacts.

The ERMP funds research projects, which will run from the when the dredging started in 2011 to at least 2020 to examine the short, medium and long-term impacts on a range of marine megafauna and plant life including:

- Turtles
- Inshore dolphins
- Dugongs
- Migratory shorebirds
- Mangroves
- Seagrass
- Corals and associated benthos
- Any other species relevant to the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area



A series of meetings which AFA organised with one of the scientists who sits on the ERMP Panel demonstrated an alarming situation. The Panel meets four times a year, there are no triggers for actions that would ensure convening of emergency meetings. No necropsies, no monitoring, no funding of studies, no ability to communicate with the Dredge Panel, bored bureaucrats at meetings, No proper infrastructure in place to deal with the major

issues. No record of vessel movements in Gladstone Harbour and the impact on listed species.

No proper definition of mortality caused by dredging.

Each major proponent operates under their own separate EIS and approval conditions creating an impossible situation because of the total lack of any over-arching independent regulator.

Then there's the Dredge Technical Reference Panel described on GPC's website as **a committee of technical experts and regulators the Commonwealth Government requires as part of the approvals for the dredging project.**

The panel is supposed to provide high-level advice to ensure dredging meets all of the required water quality and seagrass approval conditions to minimise impacts the project may have on the

environment. Given that the state of seagrass is critical to the survival of turtles and dugongs, the failure by governments' to allow and ensure dialogue between these two Panels can only mean either total stupidity on the part of bureaucrats OR the failure is deliberate.

Then there's the industry based Port Curtis Integrated Monitoring Program (PCIMP) which specialises in producing out of date reports.

CSIRO are doing work for the giant US companies involved in the development. The Queensland government recently created and appointed a Chair person to their much touted Gladstone Healthy Harbour Partnership. No other people or organisations have been appointed to this Partnership.

All these groups are unable to meet together or exchange information or exchange relevant expertise.

And you may have noticed, there's zero representation by conservation organisations, commercial fishermen, independent researchers, tourism, recreational fishers. In short, the public interest is shut out.

## GLADSTONE SHIPPING TRAFFIC JAN 2013

*Traffic in Gladstone Harbour, according to a local newspaper report, is now at 22,000 vessel movements a month.*

That's 5,500 vessels a week. Yet the Federal government claims that only 2 turtles have died in Gladstone Harbour as a result of ship strike.

Locals who live on Curtis Island tell us that a ferry trip to Gladstone used to take an hour. Now it can take many hours as the ferry has

to avoid heavy traffic on the harbour. It's almost impossible to imagine what a second shipping channel would mean in terms of not only its development, but the massive increase in shipping traffic.

And still both governments seek to assure the public that dugongs, turtles,

dolphins, whales, fish, oysters, scallops, sharks, stingrays, crabs and other marine critters are all just fine, doing well.

Their re-assurances fly in the face of logic and evidence, yet we the people are supposed to be so stupid we will believe this garbage.



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PO Box 414, Brunswick  
Heads 2483 Australia  
Tel: 61 2 6680 3674  
Fax: 61 2 6680 3612  
suearnold@linknet.com.au



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