



20 March 2013

CCA response to  
**Mission Beach Safe Boating Infrastructure Options Workshop Report**  
**Prepared by GHD Consultants for**  
**Department of State Development Infrastructure and Planning**

CCA does not accept any of the three options in their present form.

The Report avoids discussing solutions that do not necessitate maritime infrastructure. “No new infrastructure” (which would not necessarily exclude modifications to existing infrastructure) should have been an option considered.

The considerations were based on incomplete and inadequate information including lack of detail, no reference to the government survey of local boating needs and (as stated), no assessment *from an environmental, engineering, approval or costing perspective*.

References to wavebreaking infrastructure and the ambiguous reference to *improving boating conditions in the Bay* raise questions about boat storage, which were not directly addressed in the Report. The wording (*berthing* rather than *mooring*) suggests that boat storage is not an option, but this needs to be clarified.

Until we can be convinced otherwise by new information (insufficient detail in the Report) the construction of any infrastructure built solely as a wave-breaking device is fraught with problems that go the very core of what Mission Beach seeks to present to the world: its natural values, including its exceptional beauty. The environmental impacts of the failure of cement wave breaking walls in severe weather and ongoing maintenance costs were not addressed.

The overriding consideration must be the protection of the special characteristics of the natural environment on which Mission Beach depends for its sense of place between two world heritage areas.

The workshop did not consider the special aesthetic values of Mission Beach which contribute to the Outstanding Universal Value of the GBRWHA, now under scrutiny by the UNESCO.

Aesthetic considerations are of crucial importance to the future of Mission Beach. Aesthetics is not a matter of personal opinion. In terms of nature and world heritage, aesthetics is associated with a sense of place, of what's fitting. Inside a big port we don't notice the ugliness of the infrastructure, because it is all ugly – but all much the same, hence “fitting”: so the building of another breakwater is not seen as out of place. Put the same structure in Boat Bay and it stands out at once as an industrial port-like structure and intrinsically “out of place”.

Mission Beach still has the opportunity to keep faith with its unique world-heritage related position and keep its future options open. Built structures in Boat Bay and on the shore will diminish its

perception as a special world heritage place, and at the instant of first viewing: people tend to keep their first impressions. A barge ramp built at Clump Point creates the industrial port look, as well as having environmental impacts.

The consultants could have investigated and drawn conclusions about the feasibility of Boat Bay ever being a “safe harbour” rather than ducking this fundamental question. The shoal nature of the Bay and its location as a active lee shore are characteristics of the place. There is value in celebrating that Mission Beach and the special places accessed from Mission Beach are still close to nature and not subject to gross built structures which would only diminish the romance of the visit and remind visitors that human activities are predominantly destructive of nature.

Built marine infrastructure is not the answer to poor seamanship. The myth of a built “safe harbour” has surely been exposed once and for all at Cardwell, where the “Port Hinchinbrook” marina, a dry-land marina with hundreds of metres of built-up land (and houses) between it and the Hinchinbrook Channel, and supposedly in the lee of Hinchinbrook Island, nevertheless was overrun by such a height of destructive water from the sea (combined storm surge and cyclonic wave action) that it was destroyed – even though the peak occurred near low tide.

These environmental and aesthetic matters are far more important than the quibble over how to get around the boundary-changing problem of building a breakwall: the remedy is simple - don't build it. The mere fact that the structure would cause a legal problem is a clear signal that it would cause environmental problems too – not to mention aesthetic degradation of a beautiful place. Boundary changes and change avoidance has been related to environmentally and aesthetically damaging infrastructure in other parts of the GBRWHA (eg Magnetic Is (Nelly Bay) and Hamilton Is marina).

### **Previous documents relating to the current boating infrastructure discussion since 2011.**

[Presentation to Cassowary Coast Regional Council](#) March 2011

[Analysis of GHD jetty options](#) public presentation Dec 2011

[Allance to Save Hinchinbrook \(ASH\) Media Release](#)

Wayne Swan forces ad hoc development in GBRWHA – pre-empts proper assessment process supported by Cassowary Coast Alliance July 2012

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