

# Why Boat Bay - and what's if got to do with NQCC?

The fight for Boat Bay is the fight for everything we have already gained as a direct result of the Oyster Point campaign. Only because of bringing in the Commonwealth in 1994, and the consequent Federal court case in 1996, did we eventually get Queensland environmental legislation for Hinchinbrook Channel and the whole Queensland coast. This legislation comprised the *Queensland Coastal Act*, the *Queensland State Coastal Plan*, and the *Regional Coastal Management Plans*.

If Boat Bay is not safe, neither is any other pristine or relatively undeveloped coastal area.

BOAT BAY is immediately north of Clump Point, Mission Beach. This wide, shallow bay is fully exposed to the prevailing winds and ocean waves. There are no massive islands lying close enough to afford any protection from cyclones. Nevertheless, developers have long wanted to put a wall around it and make a marina there, under names like "Mission Beach Boat Harbour". This mythical marina has even been used to promote land sales.

After seeing what Yasi did to "Port Hinchinbrook" marina (which at least enjoys the protection of sufficient land to be spared destructive wave action), you would think that a smart entrepreneur would not want to invest in a marina where nothing but an overtopped rock wall separated the boats from the high intensity wave action of a cyclone. Although it defies all logic, the smashing up of the "Port Hinchinbrook" boats is now argued by Steve Wettenhall and the would-be developers as a reason to build another marina in an even more exposed position - Boat Bay. The developers have even tried to get post-Yasi reconstruction money for it.

Mission Beach residents live and farm in rainforest cassowary habitat and enjoy a low-key village lifestyle. The Djiru people have identified cultural sites on land and sea. These natural, social and cultural values are currently protected in legislation:

1. *GBRMPA habitat protection zone* (dark blue on GBRMPA RAP map) - the whole bay.
2. *Area of State Significance Natural Resources (significant wetlands)* (test for development activities: *no adverse impact*) as shown in Map 27 of the *Wet Tropical Coast Regional Coastal Management Plan* - a wide area along the whole coast and Clump Point headland.
3. *Desired Coastal Outcomes* (Ch. 3) of the *Wet Tropical Coast Regional Coastal Management Plan*.
4. *Great Barrier Reef State Marine Park* - the intertidal zone. The *Marine Parks Act* applies.
5. Aboriginal cultural sites on sea and land; native title claims about to be settled.
6. *Far North Queensland 2009-2031 Regional Plan*, which repeatedly refers to constraints on development for Mission Beach to protect its natural values and its village lifestyle:

"The urban footprint at Mission Beach will be constrained to minimise future impacts on ecological values, coastal hazard risks and loss of the village character... Future development should occur around village nodes and avoid linear form, maintain and restore cassowary habitat, and ensure good corridor connectivity." (p26)

"Mission Beach ... considered as priority areas for biodiversity conservation (DCILGPS, 2000)". (p41)

"Land use policy 4.1.7 seeks to protect the values and character of village activity centres. Village activity centres such as Kuranda and Mission Beach have a strong village feel and linkages with regional landscape and rural production values ..." (p75)

## **Enter the devil - in the detail: the draft Coastal Plan 2009.**

When finalised, the new Coastal Plan will render obsolete all the regional coastal management plans, thus expunging all the mapped *Areas of State Resources (Natural Resources)* and all the *Desired Coastal Outcomes* (2 and 3 above): science and community both ignored.

Further, the draft Plan will introduce a new zoning system - *maritime development areas (MDA)* - to allow dredging, rock walls and reclamation. In the published draft, hundreds of MDAs had been liberally mapped along the coast without any regard to the natural values and applicable formal protection.

By June 2010, face with state-wide conservation movement opposition, DERM agreed (amongst other things) to remove MDA designation from Boat Bay and two other "greenfield" sites (places which were near-pristine, or where such activities had already been refused) and had considerably modified the remainder.

ASH wrote to the Minister for Sustainability and Climate Change pointing out if the Minister were to sign off on the draft Plan as published, she would have agreed to a lowering of the existing standards of protection of the natural environment. Detailed comparisons of existing and proposed legislation, and the implications, were provided.

*The Minister has replied that it is not her intention to lower the standards of protection.*

*DERM's formal recommendation to Cabinet (2011) is that there be no MDA over Boat Bay.*

This was great news; but we wonder how one environment minister can stand up to the rest of Cabinet, hungry as they seem to be for growth regardless of the constraints supposedly enshrined in recent planning legislation.

## **Avoiding scrutiny - admission of illegitimacy!**

In the same time frame as the draft Coastal Plan, Tourism Queensland (a statutory body) wrote a non-statutory Tourism Opportunities Plan (TOP), under the Queensland Government logo. Despite DERM's and the Minister's position, the TOP lists Boat Bay as one of 18 "catalyst projects" for priority development, under a new name: "Mission Beach Boat Haven". Neither conservationists nor Mission Beach locals had any idea what was afoot.

We have now been given contradictory advice: "Don't get hung up on the TOP" and "If you want to stop it, act quickly before it becomes unstoppable".

Given the legislative background, the only way a marina (and associated development) could go ahead would be if it were declared a State-significant project (as at Oyster Point), or a MDA, or both.

**Please write quickly to make the Government aware that not only Mission Beach residents but a much wider community is alarmed at the possibility that this government would consider overturning recent planning legislation and the low-key village vision of Mission Beach to line the pockets of three private developers.**

The Mission Beach community - including long-resident tourism operators, shop-keepers and farmers - envisages nothing larger or more environmentally harmful than a well-designed T-shaped jetty and a boat ramp appropriate to low-key recreation and marine tourist operations.

For further information please visit the "Mission Beach Naturally" website.

**Please write to:**

**Hon Anna Bligh MP**

**Premier and Minister for Reconstruction**  
**PO Box 15185, City East QLD 4002**  
[thepremier@premiers.qld.gov.au](mailto:thepremier@premiers.qld.gov.au)

**and copy your letter to:**

**Hon Paul Lucas MP**  
**Deputy Premier and Attorney-General, Minister for Local Government and Special Minister of State**  
**PO Box 15009, City East QLD 4002**  
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**Hon Kate Jones MP**  
**Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability**  
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**Hon Jan Jarratt MP**  
**Minister for Tourism, Manufacturing and Small Business**  
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If you want to know more about Mission Beach and its vision for the future, the following hyperlinks (Ctrl-click) are informative:

[Friends of Boat Bay](#) A scenic and interpretive visit to Boat Bay.

[Boat Bay Mission Beach](#) 7 min - 12 May 2010 - Uploaded by peterpanther08  
A short educational film about an ecologically sensitive *bay* in *Mission Beach* threatened by developers.

[Site Management Arrangements](#) (GBRMPA)

[Clump Point Photos & High Resolution Image Gallery](#) (waves crash over Clump Point and jetty, January 2009)

## **SUGGESTED POINTS FOR YOUR LETTER**

The following points are relevant to Boat Bay:

- Mission Beach has special World Heritage values, where the Wet Tropics and the Great

Barrier Reef World Heritage Areas meet: rainforest and cassowaries, beach stone curlews, seagrass and dugongs; high scenic values including the rainforest clad hills, the headland and island views.

- All marine creatures need the benthic communities (including seagrass) to be protected from dredging and other polluting development activities;
- There is a risk of bootstrap development - starting with a small development then claiming more is needed to be economically viable; or claiming flow-on infrastructure "needs" (such as bigger and faster roads) with consequent land based impacts on cassowaries and other terrestrial wildlife;
- There is no such thing as a *safe harbour* on this cyclone prone coast. DERM should be reviewing the draft Coastal Plan to ensure that **no new large scale development is allowed along this cyclone coast**, with its now demonstrated risks to human life and property;
- DERM must not abandon the wildlife and habitat presently protected under existing legislation, nor the good work of past DERM officers and scientists, nor override the input of long community consultation, nor ignore the "*Mission Beach - Naturally*" vision of the Mission Beach community;
- All past planning and community input has formally excluded large scale maritime development from Boat Bay, based on appropriate principles. No proposals for such a dramatic change should be entertained by government;
- No major development should be under consideration while a Native Title claim is close to being settled for the local Djiru people.

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