

PHOENIX!

NEWSLETTER OF

THE ALLIANCE TO SAVE HINCHINBROOK INC



Pres. Margaret Thorsborne, VP Margaret Moorhouse, Sec/Treas Mal McLean

NEW MINISTER FOR 'DERM'

Welcome to the Hon. Vicki Darling MP

ASH welcomes the new Environment Minister, The Hon Vicki Darling. We thank the former incumbent, The Hon Kate Jones, for her strong interest and strenuous efforts on behalf of the natural world, and especially for working to minimise the losses in protection arising from the new Coastal Plan.

The emphasis on whole-of-government (WOG) decision-making and the politically low status of the environment portfolio have combined to make improvements in environmental protection difficult to achieve.

THE NEW STATE COASTAL PLAN

SUMMARY

DERM (Department of resource Management) was the lead agency in developing the new Queensland Coastal Plan (QCP), which is about to come into effect.

All the regional coastal management plans, including the Cardwell-Hinchinbrook Regional Coastal Management Plan (CHRCMP) and all that mapping of special areas of protection, have been quietly discarded by amending the Queensland Coastal Act to no longer require regional coastal management plans or the associated regional consultative groups.

The CHRCMP was extremely important to the Hinchinbrook Region. The one good aspect of the new Queensland Coastal Plan is that DERM now has concurrence agency status over the whole Coastal Zone, but its former top-of-the-range catchment wide zone has been shrunk to a narrow coastal strip.

Concurrence agency status gives DERM authority to reject inappropriate development applications at the stage preceding local Council consideration and decision-making.

The increased area of DERM authority is welcome; but the new State Coastal Plan lacks the strong and detailed provisions of the lost regional coastal plans.

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

to be held in

Cardwell

on

Saturday 23rd July at 2:00pm,

to be followed by a

GENERAL MEETING

At 2:30pm

**For meeting location - please phone
Margaret Thorsborne 07 40 668 537 or
Margaret Moorhouse 0427 724 052**

If NOT attending in person,

**PLEASE REMEMBER TO SEND YOUR
PROXY!**

Proxy (and renewal) forms are enclosed

**The present committee members as
described at top left (beneath photos)
have re-nominated for their present
positions.**

Why such a small committee?

Although ASH remains strictly a "grass roots" association, it has no central office and its members are widely scattered. The small committee reflects the historical need for rapid decision-making and local action. Other members are co-opted for specific tasks from time to time as need arises. The present committee honours the trust the members place in us.

Membership renewals.

Many members now use direct banking for payment of memberships and donations. By 31st March (the end of our financial year) most renewals had been received. Thank you for your patience over paper receipts, which we enclose with newsletters.

An exceptional Australian Margaret Thorsborne receives her AO from the Governor of Queensland

Story by Liz Downes

It might have been a grey autumn day in Brisbane but there was no stopping the warm and sunny smiles when ASH president and elder stateswoman of the environment movement, Margaret Thorsborne, received her Officer of the Order of Australia honour from the Governor of Queensland, Her Excellency Penelope Wensley, AC, on 23 May 2011.

As we gathered on the lawns of Government House I felt honoured indeed to be among Margaret's guests on such a great occasion. Her other equally delighted guests were: her niece Lynn Preece, and friends Carol Muller and Jane Thomson. Jane had been the instigator of the nomination, and without her this day might never have happened. She, and her husband Alan, were also our most generous hosts during our stay in Brisbane.

The investiture lived up to every expectation. Gracious and dignified, yet never pompous or stuffy, it perfectly reflected the classic elegance of Government House itself. From the Governor down, all staff and officials were, without exception, warm, friendly and welcoming.

It wasn't just the recipients who were made to feel like VIPs!

As for Margaret, one of only two recipients of the high-ranking officer category (AO), with her lovely smile and beautiful pink outfit, she simply shone. When she turned towards the assembled guests, with the Governor's arm around her shoulder and the handsome insignia around her neck, the four of us were beaming with pride and delight – and shedding a few tears as well. What a very special, and moving, moment this was.

In her excellent speech the Governor described the honours as “the highest in the land – the most prestigious that it is possible to give, or to receive” and congratulated the recipients for being recognised as “exceptional Australians” “whose achievements put them above their peers”.

A heavy rain shower meant that the reception was held upstairs rather than in the gardens. No matter, it meant we got to see more of the interior of this beautiful building. Here we were able to mingle with other recipients and guests – and we couldn't help noticing how many of them wanted to speak to Margaret! The Governor also circulated freely, making sure she spoke to everyone, often at some length. Margaret was especially touched that she twice commented on how proud Arthur would have been.

Another special thrill was meeting VIP guest Lt Col Andrew Freeman. He seemed particularly delighted to meet and talk with Margaret and when she brought him over to meet us, we discovered his uncle was none other than Senator Bob Brown! We excitedly told him that



Bob Brown had been one of the referees for Margaret's nomination and he, with equal enthusiasm, said he couldn't wait to tell his uncle about meeting Margaret.

Eventually we were gently ushered downstairs where uniformed gentlemen with umbrellas gallantly escorted us to our cars – for a moment Margaret showed an inclination to go *upstairs*, which drew the amused comment from one of the staff, “No, you're not moving in ... yet!”

Thanks to Jane and Alan's hospitality we all gathered at their home for some celebratory champagne, a friendly meal and moments of reflection and memories. It had been more than two years since the work began on achieving this national recognition for Margaret's inspirational life of service to community and environment. Now, for all involved, and for Margaret's host of friends and admirers, there really was a sense of “mission accomplished.”

This was not an end to our adventures. Next day Margaret and I bussed into the city where our first goal was to navigate George Street's corridors of power where another friend, and former Wildlife Queensland director, Adrian Jeffreys, was waiting to greet us. Next stop was across the road to Wildlife House, for a delicious morning tea and lots of talk and photos, with staff and volunteers at WPSQ Head Office. Other tasks completed, we revelled in a Citycat ride up-river from North Quay to St. Lucia, giving a reasonable impersonation of the the stars of *Titanic*!

That evening, Jane, who is Vice-Principal of UQ's Emmanuel College, had invited us to attend the College's weekly formal dinner. The act of donning our borrowed academic gowns seemed to confer the gravitas necessary to process into the large hall, filled with several hundred students, and to take our places at high table. Margaret, looking every inch the professor, was introduced to loud applause and we discovered quite a few of those present had walked the Thorsborne Trail. It was a delightful meal in the company of some of the bright young people who might one day follow in the footsteps of inspirational figures such as Margaret.

Wednesday saw our last "official engagement" with the Order of Australia Association lunch at Mt Coot-tha's *Botanic* restaurant. Here we were joined by Margaret's cousin Barbara Young, who received an AO in 1993 for her work with Save the Children and the Refugee Council – it struck me that two such honours in one family must be rare and is surely to be admired. The lunch gave us the opportunity to hear from some of the other new honours recipients, each of whom was asked to say a few words. Margaret's little speech, paying tribute to those who had inspired her, and expressing her passionate wish for all of us to "tread gently on the earth", was very moving and warmly received.

All too soon we were heading towards the airport for the homeward journey. It was sad to come to the end of such a magical few days, but what wonderful memories there are to treasure. Back in Townsville we fell into bed about midnight but, waking to a sparkling North Queensland morning, easily yielded to the temptation of coffee and cake on the Strand with a view across Cleveland Bay's sparkling blue waters!

Our last stop, before Margaret boarded the northbound bus back to Cardwell, was to pay our respects to Arthur at his plaque in the Anzac Park Garden of Remembrance. It was a good way to finish. #

For the Governor's speech, copy this link:

http://www.govhouse.qld.gov.au/the_governor/110523_investiture_spch.aspx

Committee activity 2010 - 2011

ASH held no general meetings during the year 2010-2011. The committee was (as usual) in very frequent contact by physical meetings and phone, and in discussion with 'local' ASH members and other conservation groups, particularly in relation to the draft QCP, specific coastal threats.

We apologise again for no 2010 issue of **PHOENIX!** Several attempts to produce a newsletter were thwarted by the amount of work and travel required to review and consult over the draft *Queensland Coastal Plan* (QCP), Margaret Moorhouse's mid-year wrist-reconstructive surgery (many months of disability), the pre-election farce over dugong and turtle deaths, Cyclone Yasi and its physical aftermath, and the post-cyclone push for a marina at Boat Bay. #

Yasi-related community distress

Cyclone Yasi has left so much trouble in its wake that many conservationists along the affected coast have not been able to reach a point of equilibrium or to feel that they have caught up with their past settled lives.

Apart from the work required to assist and support wildlife (such as cassowary and mahogany glider feeding) while living in very difficult circumstances (such as cramped temporary quarters, wrecked homes) with belongings lost, scattered or damaged, conservationists also have to deal with the ongoing and badly-named post-cyclone 'clean-up'. Big machines, gung-ho operators, tree-haters and even enthusiastic volunteers repeatedly and needlessly "clean up" native vegetation that should be left alone.

On top of the grief and anxiety occasioned by the cyclone, and the impossibility of any visual escape from its horizon-wide wreckage, the wilful human destructiveness following Yasi adds a new dimension to the distress of those who care about the future of native vegetation and wildlife.

The psychological aftermath of cyclone Yasi is not so easy to see and it is even harder to deal with. In the high-wind zone there is no escape from the daily experience of horizon-wide evidence of a world changed forever. Older adults face the unpalatable and grief-laden fact that they will never be able to see this country again, as it was the day before the cyclone. The unconscious desire to remove the evidence of destruction, to see trees securely standing upright, can lead to the unnecessary removal of damaged vegetation. The burst of new leaves on what's left standing often turns a tree into a bizarrely sculpted form that continues as a statement of "devastation".

Longing for impossible restoration and reparation, along with grief for acknowledged losses, can fuel misdirected anger and irritability; often aimed at those nearest and most familiar, because these are the people from whom we expect the most. Officialdom easily becomes a handy target for group distress, whether justified or not.

Riding on the wave of community distress come the dollar-hungry opportunists, whether contractors creating as big a job as possible, or carpet baggers humbugging governments for money and approvals in the name of "recovery". It only takes a few predatory entrepreneurs to divide a troubled community and lure vulnerable locals with promises of new riches.

In Cardwell the same old faces are again pushing for acres of tarmac and getting trees off the Cardwell foreshore ("spoils the view") in the name of "recovery".

The department of Main Roads has responded promptly to ASH letters to the government with reassurances that they are not supporting some of the rumoured options. They will not reroute the Bruce Highway (for a very long time) or do more than rebuild a two-lane Bruce Highway to current safety standards. #

THE NEW STATE COASTAL PLAN - CONSULTATION 2010

As published in late 2009, an entirely new draft Queensland Coastal Plan (QCP), under an amended *Queensland Coastal Act*, turned out to be a Trojan horse facilitating new coastal development rights while pretending to protect coastal processes and biodiversity: most past legal protection would be lost, opening the Hinchinbrook coast to new maritime development possibilities.

Worse, all the other coastal communities on the Great Barrier Reef coast were facing similar disastrous downgrading of protection: Boat Bay Mission Beach was a particular instance where the DERM draft simply ignored the facts of current formal protection such as the Marine Parks Act, the GBRMPA statutory Zoning Plan, existing DERM mapping as an *Area of State Significance Natural Resources (Significant Wetlands)*, and the considerations and prohibitions set out in the relevant statutory regional coastal management plan - almost an exact parallel to Cardwell and Oyster Point.

In early 2010 the ASH committee agreed that the proposed legislative changes meant that ASH could not defend its own patch (Lucinda to Mission Beach) without defending the whole Queensland coast; a problem already encountered in other areas such as dugong protection.

After early interactions with DERM it also became clear that ASH would be isolated and sidelined unless other groups fully understood the deviousness of the draft plan, and worked together to defeat it. Networking with other groups was the next time-consuming task, by email and phone, circulating and explaining ASH responses to the draft QCP.

Understanding the history is important: it was the Hinchinbrook Campaign that had led to the original Queensland Coastal Act and Plan being written. The Act came into effect in 1995 and mandated state and regional plans. In his *Statement of Reasons* for the 1996 Consent for "Port Hinchinbrook", the Commonwealth Minister relied on a coastal plan yet to be written; and when *Friends of Hinchinbrook* challenged the Consent, the Federal court upheld it on the basis that a Queensland Coastal Plan and Regional Coastal Management Plan

would be in place to control the operational aspects of the marina/canal estate. The Hinchinbrook Regional Coastal Plan (CHRCMP) was released in 2003 - only seven years late.

Decisions about legislation are ultimately political in nature. Queensland peak groups, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the Environment Defender's Office (EDO) agreed that the lost protections in the draft QCP, (including the proposed Maritime Development Areas (MDA) designation over Boat Bay, would signify a dramatically reduced level of nature protection for the entire Queensland coast, with implications for Oyster Point and the still lingering application for "Port Hinchinbrook Stage II".

In early 2010 the circulation of ASH responses to the draft QCP led to a last minute invitation from QCC's Toby Hutcheon for Margaret Moorhouse to lead the formal approach to DERM (Brisbane) on behalf of all north and far north Queensland conservation groups. In June 2010, the small deputation of Queensland peak group representatives (including the Environment Defender's Office and the World Wide Fund for Nature) faced DERM in Brisbane, united in opposition to central features of the draft QCP. Margaret's fare to Brisbane was funded jointly by North Queensland Conservation Council and Cairns and Far North Environment Centre.

This meeting, with its state-wide unified position, was crucial to DERM making important changes. We could not get the conceptual blot of Maritime Development Area (MDA) removed from the draft plan, but we were remarkably successful in removing MDAs (which allow dredging, reclamation, and rock walls) from aquaculture farms, boat ramps, jetties and "greenfield" sites; and in getting their too-generous boundaries shrunk to the immediate works in existing marinas.

There were many other important changes, including a belated recognition that the sea too needs formal protection: "The new Queensland Coastal Plan ... will also incorporate recognition of marine areas with high ecological significance by mirroring values identified in existing Marine Park plans" (Queensland Coastal Plan 1. Building resilient ecosystems p45). #

STATE COASTAL PLAN 2011 - IT'S NOT OVER YET

A network of motel owners and prospective marina developers lobbied the State government to get Boat Bay identified in the Tourism Opportunities Plan (TOP) as a "catalyst project" targeted for "priority funding", at the same time as the draft Coastal Plan was being developed - and a huge Maritime Development Area (MDA) was mapped over Boat Bay in the Plan. Although the proposed MDA was deleted from the final Queensland Coastal Plan, this battle is still to come. ***The entire Cassowary Coast from Cardwell to the Johnstone River is to be the subject of a planning study to decide whether there will be one or more sites for a marina.***

After ASH representations to DERM (27th June) we have at least been spared a re-run of the Hinchinbrook Channel. DERM's planning study will analyse "need", examine "constraints", then identify specific sites and consult interested parties. Forseeable developer desires include marinas *and ancillary development* somewhere on the beach from Clump Point to Bingil Bay; dredging the Johnstone River; marina in Mourilyan Harbour (already a port). Local carpetbaggers are out in force, promising a "safe harbour" on a wide-open cyclone prone coast. Haven't we heard all this before? #

Dugong Roundtable Cairns with Commonwealth Environment Minister Tony Burke and Queensland Sustainability Minister Kate Jones

This meeting was called in response to lopsided publicity created by solitary stirrer Colin Riddell and politician Warren Entsch (now an MP) in the lead-up to the state election. ASH had unsuccessfully tried to get a different view into the media (that ALL killing of dugongs should cease, not just so-called "indigenous" killing). No media outlet was interested in correcting the proposition that all the killing was due to indigenous hunting.

Only two conservationists were invited to the meeting, Margaret Moorhouse (ASH) and Steve Ryan of Cairns and Far North Environment Council (CAFNEC). Margaret's attendance was funded by the Parks and Wildlife section of DERM (Brisbane). There were a few fishing representatives, and a large number of Traditional Owners from the far north coast of Queensland.

Professor Helene Marsh made a telling presentation of the facts, and emphasised the loss and threatened loss of seagrass as an important threat to dugongs.

The planned destruction of hundreds of hectares of seagrass to allow for Gladstone port expansion would

be a direct blow against the survival of the southern population. Although Southern GBR numbers hover on the brink of extinction, this group still has a chance of recovering to a safer population size, supposing enough suitable seagrass remains to sustain cyclone refugees who may have to travel very long distances out of a cyclone ravaged area to find food.

Steve Ryan spoke about the drowning deaths due to legal and illegal gillnetting. A slow campaign is mounting to ban ALL gillnetting in dugong habitat.

Margaret emphasised that although many threats are shared with Torres Strait and far north coast dugongs, the Southern GBR herds have different conditions and problems, eg "reclamation" of extensive seagrass fields.

The Southern GBR dugongs are the one population that might survive into the future, principally because human behaviour in this region can be substantially better monitored and controlled. The far northern population, though more numerous, is largely beyond the reach of authorities and is being slaughtered at an unsustainable rate. #

Politician responses to community inquiries

Letters to politicians often fail to elicit a meaningful response. ASH has sent a detailed letter to The Hon. Jan Jarratt, the Queensland Minister for Tourism, asking questions about how the Tourism Opportunities Plan (TOP) came to be written at the same time as the draft Coastal Plan. So far this has elicited only a long form letter irrelevant to our inquiries.

We have written again, asking for our questions to be answered. A difficulty for the Tourism Minister is how to explain away "Safe Haven" (a sure indicator of plans for a marina, or rock walls at the very least) as a description of a jetty or other "minor facility".

Alongside is the response from **Townsville's Ewen Jones MP** to my private letter seeking support for the Coral Sea Campaign. This campaign is for protection of the ocean *outside* the Great Barrier Reef to the far eastern boundary of Australia's Economic Exclusion Zone.

The email message arrived in *white* type, so couldn't be read at all until I highlighted the apparently blank page to uncover the hidden text, reproduced here *exactly* as received.

I wrote again, attached explanatory documents, and asked to be put in touch with the AIMS and JCU staff referred to.

There has been no response.

Margaret Moorhouse

From: **Jones, Ewen (Private)** <Ewen.Jones@aph.gov.au>
Date: Mon, May 30, 2011 at 1:20 PM
Subject: RE: Protect Our Coral Sea Petition Signature

Margaret,

I think our current green zone areas are sufficient. We have the highest level of private boat ownership in the country and our weather prevents people getting out to the reefs etc for long periods, also assisting with protection of the zone.

I am in constant contact with people at AIMS and JCU and they do not see the need for further action here.

I thank you for your interest

Ewen Jones

Member for Herbert

COASTAL PLANNING OR RUSSIAN ROULETTE?



"Port Hinchinbrook" a month after cyclone Yasi, towards low tide. Foreground: artificial land gone and and rock retaining wall scattered including well down the intertidal zone (circled in photo). The breakwalls shed many rocks into the access channel (not visible in this photo).

In 12 February this year The Australian newspaper published an article by Natasha Bitu "Elemental struggle". The article quotes Professor Jonathan Nott from the Australasian Palaeohazards Research Unit at James Cook University, where he is Professor of Physical Geography (Geomorphology and Natural Hazards).

As the article reveals, Professor Nott (who lives in Cairns) makes no bones about North Queensland's business-as-usual coastal development:

"We continue to propose development right on the waterfront, right in the storm surge and storm tide zone. It's putting people in danger; it's like letting them build on a highway."

The article goes on to ask pertinent accusatory questions:

"Why are so many homes built in the path of danger, on floodplains and in bushfire hazard zones? Why were they not constructed to weather the well-known risks? And why is so much essential infrastructure -- highways and hospitals, power and phone lines -- still so vulnerable to such regular wreckage?"

NSW too is facing coastal planning disasters. The article quotes NSW Australian Local Government Association president Genia McCaffery, the mayor of North Sydney:

"North of Sydney, there's been terrible planning and they've basically let everyone demolish frontal dune areas to build right on the beach. People have been

obsessed about having a property right on the beach but with the combination of storms, high tides and rising sea levels, that's an absolute disaster waiting to happen."

Despite history, scientific advice and the best efforts of Queensland conservationists, the new Queensland Coastal Plan (QCP) continues to allow housing and commercial development to be built within the newly named "hazard zone" provided that this is accompanied by an application to build a marina. In the QCP it is put around the other way: if you lodge an application for a marina, you may also build "ancillary development" on low lying land not available to others.

This intent is clearly articulated in a promotional article in MultiHull magazine March-April 2008. According to Colliers International, "marina berths have become the new clever investment".

At the new "Port of Airlie" (Muddy Bay, Airlie Beach), the seaside high-rise housing subdivision (units) is described as having "a marina component". The high rise units of the "Port of Airlie" marina went up very quickly while the bottom of Muddy Bay was killed for the sake of a lonely pontoon or two and a handful of moored boats. Changes in boat insurance policies (see p8) may however force new demand for this marina.

Professor Nott laid the blame squarely on the QCP, which allows developers to continue to build in storm surge areas.

The *Ecoaccess Guideline Mitigating the Adverse Impacts of Storm Tide Inundation* provides official interpretation of the QCP:

6.15 Development that is incompatible with the nature of the storm tide hazard may be approved where it is a development commitment.

6.18 Development that is incompatible with the nature of the storm tide hazard can be approved on the grounds of overriding need in the public interest.

Two outcomes are required to be met:

Outcome 1: Within a natural hazard management area (storm tide), development to which State Coastal Plan policy 2.2.4 applies is compatible with the nature of the storm tide hazard, except where:

- the development proposal is a development commitment; or
- there is an overriding need for the development in the public interest, and no other site is suitable and reasonably available for the proposal.

Outcome 2: Development that is not compatible with the nature of the storm tide inundation hazard but is otherwise consistent with Outcome 1:

- minimises as far as practicable the adverse impacts from storm tide inundation; and
- does not result in an unacceptable risk to people or property.

The Queensland conservation movement objected strenuously to these clauses throughout the 2010 negotiations over the draft QCP. The driver seems to be "develop at any cost". Failure to respect the natural environment, coastal processes and future community

safety is expressed in the numerous exemptions, loopholes and weak measures in the new QCP.

Other voices cited in *The Australian's* article include Angus Witherby, who has represented the Planning Institute of Australia on the federal government's disaster mitigation working party, and the CSIRO. Long before Yasi, the CSIRO had proposed that governments "repossess" developed areas in danger zones, and ban rebuilding. Witherby argues for a moratorium on new development in the tropics, and a "planned and staged retreat" from flood plains, storm surge and bushfire hazard areas. Meanwhile, the Australian Building Codes Board is devising new standards for building in flood-prone zones, including sturdier materials and a return to the traditional "Queenslander" style house.

The near-miss for Cairns has given the governments a fright: a federal government emergency committee had earlier predicted that a Category 5 bulls-eye on Cairns would have produced 5 metre waves, drowned 1700 people and injured 1300 as it hit Cairns's northern beaches, before going 500m inland to destroy 312 homes and damage over 3000. This report also predicted extensive damage to power lines, fresh water and sewerage services, and the failure of telephone exchanges - all of which we have now witnessed during Yasi: two transmission towers south of Cairns and hundreds of wooden power poles came down, affecting 180,000 homes.

Getting the human population and the infrastructure off the seaward edge of the coastal plain heads us into difficult territory: which higher land is "available", and not already needed for biodiversity conservation? Is the mahogany glider doomed - squeezed between the rising



"Port Hinchinbrook" a month after cyclone Yasi, towards low tide. Foreground: rock retaining walls and the seafront back yards of the housing estate scattered across the foreshore, along with steel fencing and concrete footings.

sea and the competition from human development forced up onto the slopes? And what about the Bruce Highway - how should it be re-routed? In the face of burgeoning overseas populations and competition (read: war) over territory and resources, how do we challenge the holy cow of "growth"? What about social justice? What government wants to enter this vote-losing territory?

The greedy push for marina (and ancillary) development for Boat Bay is about quick sales, not about an ecologically sustainable future for Mission Beach, no matter how it is dressed up by property promoters. Ditto for the Johnstone River, where developers want the river dredged so they can subdivide and sell low-lying riverside land.

And while we would never be so mean as to say "we told you so", the damage caused to Oyster Point and Cardwell by "Port Hinchinbrook" is evident to all.

As predicted, the conglomerate of developer, real estate agent and land holders is trying once again to get *their* liabilities (sewage treatment and access channel dredging) taken over by the public purse.

In June, Fiona Sewell (ABC local radio) interviewed Margaret Moorhouse on this topic, in response to a local push to get the government to solve all "Port Hinchinbrook's" problems - dredging, sewerage, the lot. Margaret had no choice but to be the bearer of bad news - *there is no simple solution*. The wonders of modern

technology allowed this interview to be emailed far and wide as an audio clip, including to ASH members and the office of the environment minister.

Marina management now allows for abandonment of vessels, and a cyclone plan is not a legal requirement.

The loss of vessels is treated solely as a matter of money. Insurance practice has been reversed: whereas insurers used to specify marinas where vessels would *not* be insured (including "Port Hinchinbrook" and Townsville's Breakwater Marina), and direct or encourage skippers to take the vessel to a cyclone hole (such as Hinchinbrook Passage), they now cover vessels in these same marinas and have begun to specify areas where boats on "permanent" anchor or moorings will *not* be covered, such as Airlie Beach and Shute Harbour.

The latter looks like a move to corral boats inside marinas, where each vessel must take out \$20m of 3rd part property insurance, worth around \$600 p.a. Quite a nice business. No thought seems to have been given to the environmental impacts of abandoning vessels in marinas.

The burgeoning of marina building indicates that the Queensland government has still not tackled the realities of climate change and sea level rise. "Business as usual" is only making the inevitable adjustments in living more difficult and more costly, both socially and environmentally. #



The Arthur Thorsborne Arboretum, 30 June 2011: life re-emerges through rubble; new leaves clothing broken and torn trees, forming unfamiliar, even bizarre shapes in this blasted landscape.