

# BOAT BAY



*a habitat protection zone  
and protected in part as an  
Area of State Significance  
Natural Resources*

*Now mapped in the 2009 draft  
Queensland Coastal Plan as a  
Maritime Development Area  
(MDA)*

## Why Boat Bay - NOW???



It has come to light that some prospective marine development proponents have very recently taken advantage of the post-YASI reconstruction effort to seek assistance from the Commonwealth, to further their entirely inappropriate proposals for Boat Bay, Mission Beach.

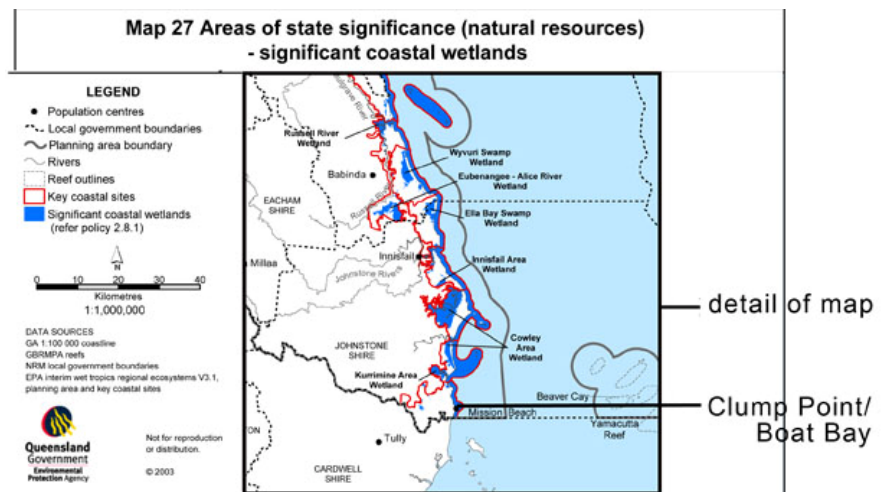
The new draft Queensland Coastal Plan (a statutory plan, that is, having the strength of law) is nearing finalisation, and its parent Coastal Act is now going through parliament. The draft Coastal Plan will soon follow. In the 2009 draft of the Coastal Plan, Boat Bay was stripped of its present very high environmental protections and virtually the whole bay designated a Maritime Development Area (MDA)

MDAs specifically allow for dredging (and potentially seadumping of dredge spoil), reclamation, and rockwalls.

In the existing coastal regional plan, much of Boat Bay is mapped (map 27 below) Area of State Significance Natural Resource (ASS NR) (*significant wetlands*)

Virtually the whole coastline of the Wet Tropical Coast and the Cardwell-Hinchinbrook coast is mapped ASS NR *significant wetlands*. Boat Bay is also in a *coastal habitat zone*. All this official protection was simply abandoned in the 2009 draft Coastal Plan.

The legal test for development activities in ASS NR is *no adverse impact*. The new development-oriented designation MDA therefore conflicts directly with existing ASS NR and other current mapping.



## Synopsis: the 2009 draft Plan and conservation meeting with DERM June 2010

Representatives of the entire Queensland conservation movement met with DERM in June 2010 to discuss the failings of the 2009 draft Coastal Plan, and specifically the introduction of the MDA as a planning device.

Around this time, public advertisements were promoting land sales at Mission Beach on the basis of future marina type development in Boat Bay. We were assured by DERM that there were no negotiations between government and prospective Boat Bay developers.

Prior to the meeting, DERM had prepared additional mapping of marine areas, introducing a new protection

designation (marine environmental significance or MES) which would be roughly equivalent to the new terrestrial Areas of *High Environmental Significance* (HES) already in the draft plan. The MDAs, however, remained, often in conflict with areas of HES.

The conservationists argued that the development-facilitating tool (MDA) is inappropriate in principle. Further, we saw MDAs as having been mapped indiscriminately in relation to marine natural values and without respecting existing official natural-value mapping, scientific information and years of in-depth community consultation.

In this respect, the existing regional coastal plans have provided strong protection for the natural and scenic values of the Cardwell-Hinchinbrook coast and the Wet Tropical coast (from Mission Beach north), including Boat Bay.

**By merely drawing some lines in the draft Coastal Plan, Boat Bay had been switched from highly protective ASS NR and coastal habitat zone protection to environmentally damaging MDA.**

## After the June meeting

Conservationists were hopeful that DERM would retain in the Plan at least some of the existing hard-won high levels of natural protection. We expected that DERM would not abandon near-pristine areas to future environmentally damaging development, especially when so starkly inconsistent with the "low-key natural setting" vision of the local community.

The Mission Beach community - including long-residents, tourism operators and farmers, recreational boaters - envisage nothing larger or more environmentally harmful than a well-designed T-shaped jetty to provide improved function for low-key marine tourist operations which would cater well beyond current needs.

Although the draft Plan is nearing finalisation, we have no idea as to the fate of Boat Bay.

## Why the urgency now?

In the wake of cyclone Yasi a small group of resort owners and developers at Mission Beach compiled a list of demands that was handed to Prime Minister Julia Gillard

and a copy sent to Premier Anna Bligh.

Their main demand is for **Major investment in tourism infrastructure including a safe boat harbour and rock wall at Mission Beach.**

We must assume that marina developers see Boat Bay as a sparkling development opportunity, and that are leaving no stone unturned to further their private interests.

They are well aware that the existing protections are about to be removed, and that a development-facilitating MDA was mapped in the original 2009 draft.

While we are led to believe the extensive public consultation and input into the new plan is still being considered, as long ago as July last year a 'Clump Point Safe Boat Haven' was one of 18 proposed tourism investment projects identified in an initiative of the State Government produced by Tourism Queensland in collaboration with the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation and Tourism Tropical North Queensland.

Only DERM and the Minister stand between Boat Bay and a marina development. And of course, us - the conservation movement. Let's not have another Oyster Point, another environmentally and socially damaging "Port Hinchinbrook". *Safe harbour* (the common justification) is a myth along this cyclone-prone coast.

Without up-to-date information about the draft plan we cannot take the chance that developer-speak may have won the day.

# You can help decide the future of Boat Bay

Please write, *as a matter of urgency*, to;  
the **Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability**  
The Hon Kate Jones MP  
PO Box 15155  
City East QLD 4002  
via email [derm@ministerial.qld.gov.au](mailto:derm@ministerial.qld.gov.au)

**Suggested points below** - please model these to your own knowledge and words

- Remember the special World Heritage values of this area, where the Wet Tropics and the Great Barrier Reef WHAs meet,
- the unique values of Clump Point/Boat Bay as the only basalt headland in the entire Wet Tropics,
- the needs of all marine creatures for protection of the benthic communities (including seagrass); turtles, dugongs dolphins, tidal mud flats - marine nursery etc,
- the risk of bootstrap development - starting with a small development then claiming more is needed to be economically viable, (thin end of the wedge),
- DERM must not abandon the wildlife presently protected under existing plans, nor the good work of past DERM officers and scientists whose evaluation of the natural values was incorporated in existing plans, nor the input of long community consultation, nor the vision of the Mission beach community,
- There is no such thing as a *safe harbour* on this cyclone prone coast. This is not the way to deal with climate change,
- flow-on infrastructure "needs" and land based impacts on cassowaries, FNQ2031 Plan specifically calls for development constraint not expansion or growth based on the impact on the world heritage values and in particular the endangered cassowary.
- Djiru Traditional Owners are currently negotiating native title lands including land in the Boat Bay area.
- How did a 'Clump Point Safe Boat Haven' become a priority project by one State Government department while the same site was in the middle of a public consultation process with another State Government department? *And* without going through a similar broad consultation process?

For more information

<http://www.missionbeachcassowaries.com/boat-bay.html>  
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