



Queensland
Government

Hon Rachel Nolan MP
Member for Ipswich

Our ref: MC44332

Minister for Transport

Your ref: Petitions

13 NOV 2009

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Neil

I refer to a petition number 1294-09 lodged with the Legislative Assembly by Mr Andrew Cripps MP, Member for Hinchinbrook, on 2 September 2009 about boating infrastructure in the Townsville area.

Provision of public recreational boat launching facilities in Queensland is made under the *Transport Infrastructure Act 1994* on a partnership basis, with the department providing the in-water components of the facility, such as boat ramps, pontoons and navigation channels. Under this partnership, the local managing authority provides the foreshore land and the land-based components, such as car-trailer parking, roads, lighting and restroom amenities.

Annual bids for state funding for the in-water components of proposed projects are submitted around November of each year by the local managing authority. State funding has been provided for all bids submitted in recent years by Townsville City Council and the former Thuringowa City Council. Two bids have been submitted for all-tide boat launching facilities on the mainland in the Townsville area in recent years and both were approved. These were for upgraded infrastructure at Railway Estate in the Ross River. All other submitted bids in recent years for boating facilities inland, or part-tide coastal streams or on Magnetic Island were also funded.

I am advised that the small number of requests in recent years by Townsville City Council and Port of Townsville Limited and their predecessors for all-tide mainland facilities, relates to the difficulty in identifying and providing suitable foreshore land to deliver their component of the partnership arrangement.

The department is working closely with Townsville City Council and Port of Townsville Limited to find a solution to the provision of suitable foreshore land with dredged access for new boat launching facilities. Several options currently under consideration are in Ross River, or in the proposed new marine precinct, near the mouth of the river.

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Pending resolution of the issue of boating infrastructure included in the proposed new marine precinct, the department is negotiating with Townsville City Council for a shorter term project to construct an additional boat launching facility to complement those at Railway Estate in Ross River. The progress of this project will be subject to tidal works and foreshore planning approvals and the provision by Townsville City Council of additional car-trailer parking capacity.

The petitioners have proposed the construction of recreational facilities near the south-eastern side of the mouth of Ross River. Unfortunately, this will not be possible due to environmental reasons. Since the early 1990s, there has been a growing awareness of the biodiversity, fisheries productivity and cultural heritage values of the extensive wetland and coastal dune resources that are found south and east of the Ross River mouth. Investigations and studies since 1996 indicate the need to protect this area, while recognising the potential of the proposed eastern access corridor to the port. An environmental impact study by Queensland Transport in 2001 recommended that an environmental reserve be established over about 530 hectares of land.

The eastern access corridor section of the Townsville port access road project is a controlled action under the Commonwealth's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. The port access project was referred to the Commonwealth and declared as a controlled action on 9 May 2003. The three controlling provisions relied on for this determination are the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, listed migratory species and listed threatened species.

Approval for the port access road by the Commonwealth under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act was granted on 28 November 2007. A condition of the approval was that the environmental reserve is managed and preserved for conservation in perpetuity. The total area of the reserve is 585.74 hectares and the management plan prohibits the entry of vehicles in order to prevent damage to marine plants and wildlife. Therefore, there is no scope for the construction of recreational boat launching facilities in this area or for any activities that contravene the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act or that require vehicular access to the reserve. I am advised that, for these reasons, there will be no vehicular access points from the proposed port access road to the area near the south-eastern side of the Ross River mouth.

It is the department's intention that the two four-lane all-tide boat ramps in Ross Creek state boat harbour, which are currently beyond capacity on busy days, will remain in use despite pressure to utilise the car-trailer parking there for other Townsville central business district developments. This intention will be reviewed only if Townsville's current and long-term future needs for all-tide boat launching facilities can be met from equivalent or improved alternative boat launching facilities.

I trust that this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R. Nolan', written over a faint circular stamp or watermark.

RACHEL NOLAN MP
Minister for Transport