



Hon. Paul Lucas MP



**Queensland
Government**

Our ref: MC6065

**Minister for
Transport and Main Roads**

11 AUG 2004

Mr Bradley Smith
37 Waterdown Drive
Elanora Qld 4221

Dear Mr Smith

Re: Petition lodged in Parliament about dredging the mouth of Currumbin Creek

Thank you for your petition which was tabled in Parliament (paper number 408) by Ms Jann Stuckey MP, Member for Currumbin on 29 April 2004, about dredging the mouth of Currumbin Creek. Your petition was forwarded to me for reply and I apologise for the delay.

The Currumbin Creek mouth is naturally shallow, as it is part of the littoral system in which there is major ongoing sand movement. This includes a net northwards longshore sand transport of around half a million cubic metres per year. The condition of the bar at the creek mouth is dominated by ocean waves, and the tidal currents and sand movement they create.

The consideration of whether or not dredging of Currumbin Creek could be undertaken so as to provide improved navigational access has been discussed at various levels of Government on many occasions in the past.

In 1999, Queensland Transport (QT) and the Gold Coast City Council (GCCC) jointly commissioned a study to examine tender proposals and assess the feasibility of carrying out a combined dredging program to meet Council's needs and provide an all-tide navigable channel.

The resultant study by WBM Oceanics, a specialist coastal engineering firm, concluded that dredging through the offshore bars would pose many practical, economic and safety problems for both GCCC and QT. The study concluded that there was no clear method of achieving a deeper navigable entrance on a reliable basis with the types of dredging plant nominated by tenderers at the time.

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To provide a permanent deeper navigation channel at the Currumbin Creek mouth would require a system of sand bypassing similar to that at the Gold Coast Seaway and the Tweed River. The initial construction cost for a similar bypass system at the mouth of the creek would significantly exceed \$10m with an expected annual operating cost well in excess of \$1m.

Spending at least \$10m on the Currumbin Bar would have to come from the same budget that funds our schools, police stations and hospitals. To put that in perspective there are about 10,000 recreational boating trips that cross the Currumbin bar in a year, or about 28 crossings a day. Just on the estimated \$1m operating cost each year for a sand bypass system at Currumbin would mean that for every time a boat went across the bar it would cost \$100.00. The Government raises about \$1.3m a year from Gold Coast boat registrations, so almost the entire revenue from these registrations would need to be spent on just the operational costs of a new sand bypassing system at Currumbin Creek.

Also, a sand bypass system does not guarantee that bars at river entrances will be crossed safely. From January 2000 to December 2003 there were 17 incidents on the Gold Coast Seaway, including six capsizes, six injuries and three collisions. One of the vessel operators who capsized on the Currumbin Bar earlier this year was quoted as saying he "shouldn't have been there in the first place, but that's my mistake and that I have to pay for".

The dredging of river bars can also cause adverse environmental impacts, due to changes to the tidal flows and from disposal of dredged material. These impacts need to be carefully managed and could significantly increase costs.

Given the significant costs involved, I would not be prepared to recommend that the State provide a permanent navigation channel at Currumbin Creek.

I have however asked Departmental officers to meet with Council, the Currumbin Volunteer Marine Rescue (VMR) and other stakeholders to discuss the problem. I understand a meeting took place at the Currumbin VMR on 27 May 2004, at which you were also present.

It was agreed that GCCC would scope a proposal for undertaking an investigation of options for providing a navigation channel including the feasibility of using a mobile sand agitation system.

I am advised that at this meeting, QT officers agreed to provide technical advice and input if required. I must reiterate that there is no commitment to funding for this study from QT nor any commitment to funding any option that may be considered viable as a result of the investigation.

The Queensland Government has already made major investments in all-tide deep water channels for the benefit of the Gold Coast boating community. QT manages and maintains the Gold Coast Seaway and channels leading to the seaway.

I note the concerns raised about the increased risk of loss of life and damage to residents' homes due to flooding. Flood mitigation is a responsibility of the GCCC. As you are probably aware, Council carries out annual dredging inside the creek for beach nourishment on nearby Palm Beach and for flood mitigation purposes.

The Currumbin Creek bar is considered hazardous due to the available depth of water and the constantly shifting sands. Boaties are advised through the Beacon to Beacon publication and through the Maritime Safety Queensland boating safety charts that the Currumbin Creek entrance is dangerous and should only be crossed using local knowledge, a suitably equipped vessel and taking into account local conditions.

Under Queensland law, the skipper of a boat has a general safety obligation to operate a vessel safely at all times, including when crossing coastal bars. All coastal bars are hazardous and vessel operators should consider the risks before attempting any crossings.

I trust this clarifies QT's position on this matter. If you require any further information, please call Mr Peter Wood, Infrastructure Branch on 3834 3839. Mr Wood will be pleased to assist.

Yours sincerely

PAUL LUCAS MP
Minister for Transport and Main Roads



Hon. Paul Lucas MP



**Queensland
Government**

Our ref: MC6065

Your ref: 312-04

**Minister for
Transport and Main Roads**

11 AUG 2004

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

Dear Mr Laurie

Re: Petition No 312-04 - Dredging the mouth of Currumbin Creek

I refer to a petition lodged by Ms Jann Stuckey MP, Member for Currumbin in Parliament on 29 April 2004, about dredging the mouth of Currumbin Creek.

Please find enclosed a copy of my reply to Mr Smith for your information. I have also arranged for an electronic copy of the response to be forwarded to your office.

Yours sincerely

PAUL LUCAS MP
Minister for Transport and Main Roads

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