



Hon. Paul Lucas MP



Queensland
Government

Minister for
Transport and Main Roads

Our ref: MC17248

Your ref: 569-05

- 2 DEC 2005

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

Dear Mr Laurie

Re: Petition about access to Russell Island

I refer to the petition number 569-05 lodged with the Legislative Assembly by Mr John English MP, Member for Redlands on 27 October 2005 requesting that a bridge be built to Russell Island.

The *South East Queensland (SEQ) Regional Plan* was launched on 30 June 2005 (see the Office of Urban Management (OUM) website www.oum.qld.gov.au). This plan seeks to manage growth and urban development in SEQ over the next 20 years. With an additional one million people expected to live in the region over this time, the *SEQ Regional Plan* seeks to relieve growth pressures on the coast, complemented by urban growth opportunities and broader housing choices in other less sensitive parts of the region.

The transport response to the plan is identified in the *SEQ Infrastructure Plan and Program* (SEQIPP). It prioritises infrastructure projects on the basis of their contribution to the achievement of *SEQ Regional Plan* outcomes, including a more compact urban form and increasing the proportion of trips made by walking, cycling and public transport. Specifically, in terms of a bridge to Russell Island, the SEQIPP is consistent with previous studies in that a bridge is not supported.

In addition to the work done in the *SEQ Regional Plan*, the Redland Shire Council (RSC) has developed a Local Area Plan for the Southern Moreton Bay Islands (SMBI) and an Integrated Local Transport Plan (ILTP) for the shire, which includes Russell Island. Queensland Transport (QT) supports these plans. The plans identify an integrated and sustainable land use and transport system for Russell Island.

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QT is working with the RSC to refine the actions for implementation of its ILTP. The strategy includes the provision of efficient and affordable ferry services to link Russell Island with the mainland. The RSC's draft SMBI and ILTP have a number of actions that are aimed at improving passenger ferry and vehicular barge services, such as supporting the re-introduction of the Cleveland service.

The draft strategy has been predicated on the basis that water-based transport will continue to service SMBI. The environmental impacts associated with future increases in ferry and barge services will need to be managed along with those associated with recreational boating.

A bridge to Russell Island is in conflict with the strategic planning directions outlined in the State Government's Moreton Bay Strategic Plan. Furthermore, a bridge would be inconsistent with the underlying principles of ecological sustainability and the Moreton Bay Strategic Plan since:

- there remain many uncertainties and concerns in relation to the environmental and social implications of a bridge to Russell Island;
- a bridge is likely to significantly alter the complexion of development on Russell Island (for example, by leading to pressure for higher density housing and a range of non-residential uses) to the extent that it would become a metropolitan suburb. Such an outcome would be inconsistent with the lifestyle values highlighted throughout most of the community consultation process and with the Russell Island vision;
- a bridge is likely to result in a demographic profile on Russell Island akin to that of the rest of the Shire, with its attendant higher occupancy rates and overall population density (up to 30% more people); and
- a bridge is likely to lead to more vehicles on Russell Island (both from residents and visitors), necessitating wider roads and exacerbating stormwater management and pollution control concerns.

QT supports improved access to the SMBI through various forms of water transport, provided they do not adversely impact on the environmental values of the Moreton Bay Marine Park and that the service requirement exists. QT currently has two service contracts and two travel concession agreements in place with regards to ferry services to the SMBI. The barge operator's levels of service are based on commercial decisions within a framework established by QT. These services provide a reasonable level of access to Russell Island.

The SMBI ILTP and SMBI Planning Strategy can be obtained from the RSC website (www.redland.qld.gov.au) or copies can be obtained from the RSC Customer Service Centre (Corner Bloomfield and Middle Streets, Cleveland Qld 4163).

In relation to the question regarding wastewater, RSC has advised that wastewater on the SMBI is managed on-site, mostly through septic tanks with absorption trenches. In the long term, I understand that the RSC plans to develop a centralised wastewater system on the island, with the aim of treating and recycling wastewater on the island. RSC advises that they have no plans to direct any wastewater back to the mainland.

Yours sincerely

PAUL LUCAS MP
Minister for Transport and Main Roads