

Open Letter to:

Hon. Tony Bourke

Australian Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities

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Hon. Andrew Fraser MP

Queensland Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for
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Hon. Vicki Darling

Queensland Minister for Environment

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07.11.12

Dear Ministers

Re: Urgent moratorium on further development approvals in the GBR World Heritage Area

Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA) is the peak group for coordinating the wise use and management of natural resources in the Fitzroy and Gladstone regions of Queensland. We urge you all to ensure that no further development is allowed to progress within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (WHA) – specifically in the wider Gladstone/Fitzroy coastal region until the strategic assessment planned under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act is completed, the impacts known and addressed.

As you are aware extensive commercially attractive reserves of coal and natural gas within the Bowen, Surat and Lake Galilee Basins have brought strong global investment. The development in these basins has been occurring for many years but is now in proceeding at a rapid pace and the growth is unprecedented. As a consequence much of the infrastructure required to support these developments is being progressed with extreme urgency. Of particular concern is that much of the port, transport and allied infrastructure development is occurring in highly sensitive coastal areas that potentially threaten the regions ecosystems and long term livability.

Of particular concern is that the coastal and in-shore environments of the iconic Great Barrier Reef WHA are under extreme pressure from coastal development and port expansion. We agree with UNESCO's World Heritage Committee, who expressed extreme concern and requested a strategic assessment of the area be completed and considered before development proceeds. This is reflective of community concern at the international and national level. A strategic assessment will help us plan for and manage the cumulative impacts of projects being proposed in the area are likely to have; however we have been advised that the process will take some 18 months to three years.

Ministers, we know you have agreed to undertake a strategic assessment and while FBA commends your governments on this, you need to act now to suspend development. Several projects are in the approval process at present with Environmental Impact Statements due in early 2012. We are proceeding in the absence of the data needed to make informed decisions and choices. It is essential that the full strategic assessment process is undertaken before these projects proceed.

We urge you to immediately release a statement of intent to undertake a strategic assessment and to ensure development approvals are put on hold until the strategic assessment is complete, such that development decisions can be made in an informed and objective manner that reflects the needs of Australia and the region into the future.

Yours faithfully



Suzie Christensen

CEO

FBA