

Click and Save Tin Can Bay

CUTTING THROUGH the thick weave of daily information is not an easy thing to do, but an important ruling is about to take place in Australia that requires your attention.

Cooloola's pending World Heritage Listing status may be compromised if newly appointed Environment Minister Tony Burke approves the development of two large marinas.

Tin Can Bay, adjacent to Fraser Island, hosts one of few outstanding ecosystems on the east coast of Australia. Since 2004, the community has banded together in the fight against a powerful developer. The battle has now escalated to a federal issue because of the potential impact on threatened and migratory species.

Australians have just a small window of opportunity to have their voice heard in protest against the development, before formal public comment closes on September 23 and a final decision is made later this year. "At this final hour, we hope to create a momentum that involves Australians in this very important decision," says Carole Gillies, President of the Southern Sandy Straits Marine Environment Group. "We've made it easy for people to put pressure on the government to reject the developer's plans."

"The area is unique, unspoilt and special - a perfect habitat for species that are threatened all over the world, and we need to make a stand and save some critical habitat for them," says Carole.

Tin Can Bay provides habitat and breeding grounds for many species including threatened Indo Pacific humpback dolphins, dugong and turtles.

Dolphins have been interacting with residents at Tin Can Bay since the 1950s, when a badly injured dolphin beached itself after it was struck by a boat. The local fishermen noticed it foundering in the shallow waters and started to feed it to nurse it back to health. They named the dolphin 'Old Scarry' because of a row of scars from previous battles. He recovered and was able to head back to the wild but returned to the beach regularly, forming a strong bond with the locals.

"After sixty years and four generations of dolphins, each morning 'Mystique' and other pod members come in and interact with humans – where they swim up to people standing in knee-deep water," says Carole. "They are offered a small amount of food – but they don't rely on it. It's just a fraction of their daily intake, yet they choose to come in."

“We know them by name, we know their parenting,” says Carole. “They have chosen over a long period of time to have a high level of interaction with humans, and many people who visit are changed by the experience - they're amazed that they can get so close to dolphins in the wild and are stunned to hear that this special bond is going to be destroyed in favour of a marina. Over 5000 signatures in protest were collected in just a few months.”

The dolphins are just one species that will suffer collateral damage as a result of the development, and may not survive the territorial conflict when forced to leave the area. Pollution and traffic from large boats will impact the health of the ecosystem, including the sea grasses and mangroves that the dolphins, dugong and sea turtles are reliant upon.

"This is a nationally important marine wilderness - we need to make that clear. We don't have to recover it [unlike nearby Moreton Bay] - it's in a pristine state with outstanding biodiversity values,” says Carole. “The development of a marina will create irreversible damage. We have fought the developer and the State government for the last five years, and now we’re asking Australians to lend their voice to help protect Tin Can Bay and its vitally important inhabitants.”

We have one small window of opportunity to take action to secure this site.

Click and save Tin Can Bay (in just 3 seconds) at www.marina.tincanbaydolphins.com.au;

OR on Facebook at ‘Save our dolphins, dugong and turtles’.

[ENDS]

MEDIA INTERVIEWS

Available for interview:

Carole Gillies, President, Southern Sandy Straits Marine Environment Group.

Dr Norm Duke, Marine Biologist, University of Queensland (refer ‘Further information’ below).

Contact Carolyn Johns: 0418 672 703 kingdomproductions@bigpond.com

Further information

“Tin Can Bay is a unique environmental setting in which mangroves and associated biota currently thrive. The surrounding area is naturally stable, characterised by sandy catchments and small tidal creeks emptying into shallow sandy flats - ideal for mangrove growth. Despite coastal development along much of the Queensland coast, the Tin Can Bay area has largely escaped environmental declines experienced elsewhere. As a result, mangrove habitats in the area are in near-pristine condition with high species diversity and ecological integrity. Recent surveys by community volunteers with MangroveWatch have shown that Teebar Ck, Carlo Ck and Snapper Ck have some of the most natural, intact mangroves in the Burnett-Mary region – and, possibly any other part of southern Queensland (see www.mangroveswatch.org.au). However, these important habitats are under threat. In Snapper Creek, the effects of increased human population pressures are beginning to show. In Snapper Creek also, MangroveWatch observations revealed: specific effects of elevated nutrient run-off; increased erosion expected from greater boat wake; and, tree dieback resulting from fuel spills from the nearby boat harbour. These impacts were particularly noticeable when compared to nearby Teebar and Carlo creeks where such human pressures were absent. There is good reason to believe these pressures will increase with further development.”

Dr Norm Duke, Marine Biologist. Principal Researcher ‘Mangrove and tidal wetland ecosystems worldwide’, University of Queensland

The Great Sandy Strait is located between World Heritage listed Fraser Island and the mainland, forming a double-ended sand passage estuarine environment. Tin Can Inlet is located at the southern end of the Great Sandy Strait with Hervey Bay at the northern end.

The region is widely recognised as one of the least disturbed estuarine environments, containing outstanding biodiversity values. The coastal wetlands are listed as internationally important sites under the Ramsar convention. The region also carries the UNESCO designation as the Great Sandy Biosphere with the following key characteristics:

- **Half of Australia’s bird species**
- **More marine fish diversity than the entire Great Barrier Reef**
- **Over 7500 recorded species of fauna and flora, many of which are rare or endangered**

There are currently two proposals for marina construction in waterways adjacent to Tin Can Inlet with provision for approximately 500 wet berths and an additional 100 dry. Both are the subject of a controlled action under the EPBC criteria with the Fraser Straits marina proposal in the assessment phase with public comments open until September 23rd. (EPBC reference 2008/4633)

We strongly believe that this proposed marina development will have irreversible negative consequences on the marine ecosystem. The EPBC controlling provisions where the marina is likely to have a significant impact as cited in the controlled action decision are:

- Wetlands of international importance
- Listed threatened species and communities
- Listed migratory species

The key causes for concern are as follows:

- Potential impacts on water quality through dredging, increased sedimentation and pollution.
- Effluent management within the marina and in the associated waterways
- A dramatic shift in boat traffic from small recreational boats, yachts, kayaks etc. to larger power vessels unsuited to the sensitive estuarine environment and narrow waterways

- Impacts of boat strike, habitat destruction and disturbance on the rare and threatened species in the area including Dugong, 5 species of marine turtle, Indo Pacific humpback dolphins, many migratory bird species as well as lesser known species such as the Water mouse and Yellow Bellied sea snake.

The proponent has placed great emphasis on their responsibility ceasing once the boats leave the marina but in this sensitive environment that is simply unacceptable.

This region is currently near pristine with relatively little development compared to other parts of the Queensland coastline. Its rich biodiversity is widely recognised. The State and Federal government are in the process of applying to have the region World Heritage listed. Allowing the construction of one marina and then another slowly erodes its value and as such we are calling on the Federal government to exercise its powers under the EPBC Act to protect the region and preserve its World Heritage values before it is too late.

Messages of support:

"What a peaceful and genuine experience, so fantastic to share a moment with the dolphins which they choose to share also. This is what the Ozzy experience is all about! Wildlife in the wild. Thank you for a magical experience in a peaceful and fabulously low tech place. LOVED IT." L.K.

"I love the way the locals get together and keep it natural! The best experience of our two months in Oz so far!" Anita Jeffery, Cheltenham U.K.

"I am writing to add my support to the campaign to stop the proposed development of the Tin Can Bay area. I believe it would do irreparable damage to the area and create irreversible disturbance to the environment of the dolphins who frequent this area. Developing, and destroying, these creatures feeding grounds would be an absolute disgrace." Rebecca, Heidelberg, Victoria

"Thank you for this amazing experience! These dolphins are absolutely beautiful. I feel so blessed I was able to interact with them. We wish you best of luck with the pod, and hope they continue to come in for years to come." Rachel and Chris, Canada

"Thank you so much. My children really enjoyed learning about Dolphins from you." The Power family, Toowoomba, Qld

"It was a totally magical experience and so rare to see wild dolphins so close. It would be a great shame to lost this wonderful opportunity to interact with them. Much appreciation to all the staff for their hard work and dedication." Noojie and Matt, Sydney

"This was an excellent experience for all. Please DO NOT allow the marina to go ahead as there are so many more generations still to enjoy this moment we have had today." Nic and Sue, Magnetic Island, Qld

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

www.marina.tincanbaydolphins.com.au

Website managed by a consortium of three local environment groups that oppose the marina

Southern Sandy Straits Marine Environment Group

<http://www.tincanbaydolphins.com.au/>

SOS Tin Can Bay

<http://www.sostcb.org/>