

## Coastal Management and the Boat Bay marina

The State Coastal Management Plan gives the general outline policy dealing with coastal development issues in Queensland, and Regional Coastal Management Plans (RCMPs) are being developed for each area.

Public submissions on the Draft Cardwell/Hinchinbrook RCMP have now closed, and submissions are now called for the Draft Wet Tropical Coast RCMP, which covers the Johnstone Shire, Cairns City and Douglas Shire.

The southern boundary of the planning area splits the Mission Beach area at Porters Creek, putting the proposed marina at Clump Point into the Wet Tropical Coast region.

The Clump Point locality gets about a page in the Draft Plan, and Boat Bay gets a few mentions:

### Draft Wet Tropical Coast RCMP

*Boat Bay supports seagrass meadows, hard corals, dugong, turtles and the vulnerable inshore Irrawaddy and Indo-Pacific Humpback Dolphin.*

*The Indigenous Traditional Owners, the Djiru people, maintain a strong cultural connection to this area, particularly through subsistence activities, specific sites (e.g. fish traps) and a rich oral tradition.*

*Boat Bay is the proposed site for major reclamation and infrastructure works to develop a marina. Such a proposal has the potential to impact on scenic amenity and the natural and cultural resources. Any marina development would need to demonstrate a significant public need and avoid potential impacts on Indigenous and broader community values, marine and terrestrial environments, World Heritage areas, rare and threatened species and broader amenity and community use of the site. Future development in the area has the risk of affecting the values, water quality and scenic values of the nearby National Parks.*

*Desired outcome: Any new development in Boat Bay does not adversely impact on benthic communities (including seagrass and hard corals), water quality, scenic quality, endangered marine fauna and Indigenous Traditional Owner cultural resources and their values.*

It is difficult to see how it is possible to build a marina, that will involve excavating at least 14 hectares of inter-tidal mudflats, whilst not adversely affecting benthic (sea-bed) communities. Indeed the Mission Beach Harbour Pty Ltd (MBH) proposal will have a strong negative impact on every item on the list.

The benthic community will be torn to shreds; seagrass and hard corals around the boat ramp will be dredged to form an entrance; water quality will be affected because boats will inevitably release polluted bilge-water into the harbour, and anti-fouling will poison marine life; dugongs will never enter the bay again because there won't be a bay any longer; and the Traditional Owners will lose access to the mudflats.

### Significant public need

The Plan says any development would need to demonstrate a significant public need, and MBH are currently attempting to establish public opinion by means of a survey.

This survey is flawed in its methodology and will **never** give an answer that will meet this requirement for public need.

For one thing, the survey was only sent out to ratepayers in the post-code areas 4852, 4854 and 4855 so many residents who aren't ratepayers have been left out of the process altogether.

For another, the survey only asks people if they **want** a marina, which is a completely different thing from demonstrating the **need** for a marina.

Why are tourists not being consulted? They are the economic life-blood of the area and they come for the undeveloped nature of the area, not for more concrete and hi-tech facilities.

### Alternative opinion sampling

Friends of Boat Bay oppose the development of a marina in the bay, and want the Boat Harbour Reserve designation to be changed to Environmental and Cultural Reserve, in recognition of the area's outstanding ecological and indigenous values.

They gave a petition of 516 signatures to Johnstone Shire Council

in June 2002, and have collected **565** more signatures since then. In addition, members of the public have written over 120 letters to Council protesting the development.

Friends of Boat Bay have entered all these names into a computer database, eliminated duplicates, and sorted the addresses into local, Australian and International origins. This database of over a thousand people dwarfs the response the Councils got to their survey on sewerage in July 1999, which got less than 400 responses. We shall have to see how many people felt strongly enough about a marina to respond to the MBH survey.

### The Alternative Solution

Given the impossibility of a marina development being able to meet all the requirements, one might wonder why the Draft Plan didn't simply say "No marina".

I asked the EPA this question and the response was that the Plan has to fit in with the Integrated Planning Act, and that act allows any development application to be lodged so long as it fits the stated purpose of the area. Consequently the Plan leaves the door open for developers to apply, whilst at the same time imposing such stringent conditions that success is impossible.

The only problem with this is that the community is kept in a constant state of agitation, never coming to an end of these proposals that threaten our quiet village lifestyle.

That is the reason why Friends of Boat Bay will be making a submission on the Draft Plan recommending that the purpose of the Reserve be changed from Boat Harbour, except within 100 metres of the jetty and the boat ramp. This would have the effect of blocking any boat harbour proposal, once and for all.

### π Dave Kimble

[www.FriendsOfBoatBay.org.au](http://www.FriendsOfBoatBay.org.au)  
Visit the web site for a more detailed story about the bay.

Copies of the Draft Wet Tropical Coast RCMP are available from EPA in Cairns, phone 40466685. Close of submissions is 16<sup>th</sup> May.