



Protect the Bush Alliance

Newsletter March 2018

In this newsletter, we summarise four coastal developments that threaten coastal wetlands and migratory shorebirds.

Our wetlands and migratory shorebirds under more pressure

Toondah Harbour, Colton Coal Mine, Styx-Fairway coal mine, Turtle Cove Haven Retirement Village; it seems that developments that adversely impact on our coastal wetlands will never end.



Australia was one of the early supporters and signatories of The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance. The RAMSAR Convention, as it is known, aims to halt the worldwide loss of wetlands and to conserve those that remain. It holds the distinction of being the first modern treaty between nations aimed at conserving natural resources.

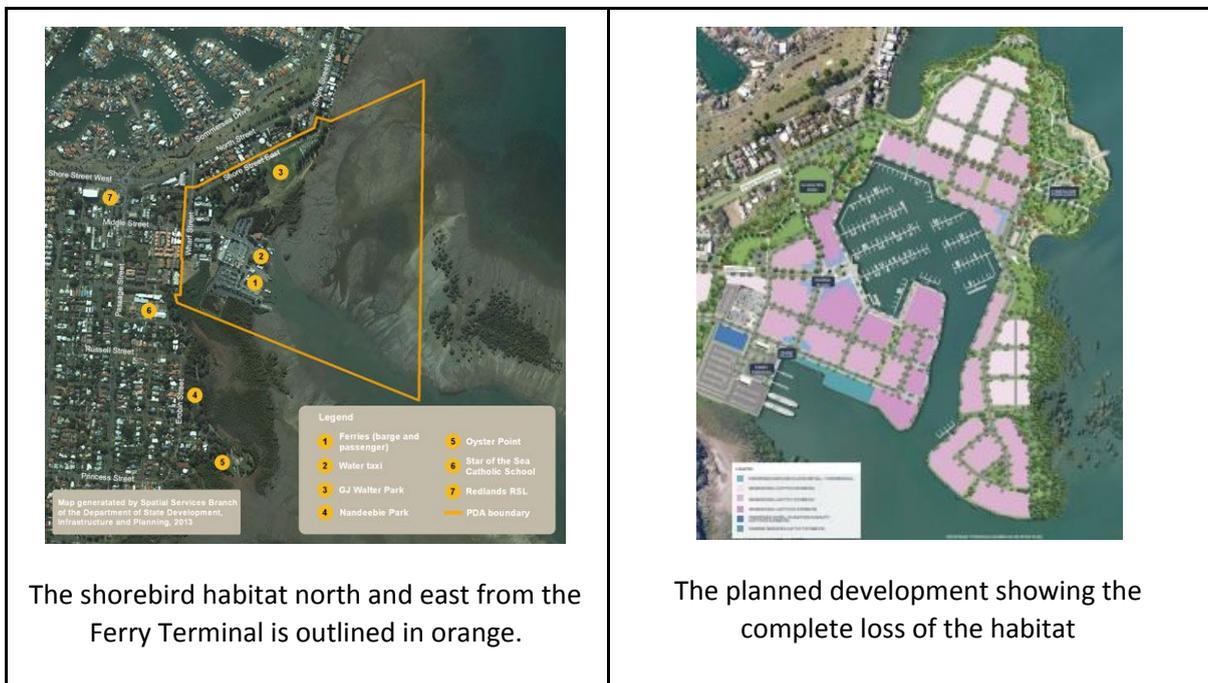
In 1974 Australia designated the world's first Wetland of International Importance; Cobourg Peninsula in the Northern Territory. Australia currently has 65 Wetlands of International Importance listed under the RAMSAR Convention, covering approximately 8.3 million hectares.

In addition to the RAMSAR wetlands, Australia has many other wetlands used by our migratory shorebirds. Despite our support for the preservation of wetlands and the parlous state of many of

our migratory shorebirds, the four developments listed above will potentially have an adverse impact on our wetlands used by migratory shorebirds.

Toondah Harbour

The planned Toondah Harbour development involves the construction of shops, mixed density housing and a private berth marina. However the development will result in the complete loss of the RAMSAR wetlands to the north of the current Ferry terminal. The whole offshore wetland area shown below within the orange boundary will be “reclaimed”. How can this happen when the Government is a signatory to the RAMSAR convention that supposedly protects such wetlands?



The shorebird habitat north and east from the Ferry Terminal is outlined in orange.

The planned development showing the complete loss of the habitat

<http://www.dilgp.qld.gov.au/planning/priority-development-areas/toondah-harbour.html>

<http://www.walkercorp.com.au/downloads/toondah-harbour/masterplan.pdf>

Colton Coal Mine

Colton Coal plans to develop a coal mine at Aldershot, north of Maryborough. The 8-10 year project sees *Melaleuca quinquenervia* woodland shown below relinquished to coal mining. This regional eco-system though once the dominant coastal vegetation community along Queensland’s south eastern coastline, is now endangered.



Melaleuca woodland near the proposed mine.

In addition, there are serious concerns over the planned handling of wastewater from the proposed mine and the potential adverse impacts on the Mary River estuary associated Great Sandy Strait wetlands and endangered migratory shorebirds. It is entirely inappropriate that untreated mine water discharge be allowed to enter the Mary River, diluted or otherwise. There has been no modelling available to assess the impacts on the benthic system of these valuable estuaries. The waste water, which by their admission, is not even suitable for stock.

Due to the steep population decline of Australia's migratory shorebirds, particularly in relation to the loss of feeding grounds along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, every feeding site is an essential stepping stone for their survival. The birds arrive in Queensland from the northern hemisphere and must rest and feed to successfully return to their breeding grounds each year. These small industrial developments occurring under an 'Environmental assessment' process, are simply death by a thousand cuts. Their cumulative impacts remain unquantified but are required as a part of the EIS process.

<http://www.newhopegroup.com.au/files/files/02%20Mining%20Lease%20Application%2050274%20%28Colton%20B%29%20-%20Documents.PDF>

Styx Coal Mine

Yet another coastal coal mine is planned. This mine is near the Styx River north of Rockhampton and straddles the Bruce Highway. This mine potentially threatens wildlife in Broadsound including the yellow chat, dugong and turtle habitat. Once again the EIS fails to take into consideration the potential adverse impact that the release of waste water from the mine into the Styx river is likely to have on the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and on rare and endangered species.

The Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area includes the waters of Broad Sound and the Styx River mouth. The Project is located only 8 km from the boundary of the World Heritage Area. Broad Sound is an important habitat for shore birds; and an important habitat for juvenile marine species as well as encompassing habitat for vulnerable species including the Dugong (*Dugong dugon*), Flatback turtle (*Natator depressus*), Australian humpback dolphin (*Sousa sahalensis*) and Australian snubfin dolphin (*Orcaella heinsohni*). In addition, the critically endangered Yellow chat (*Epthianura crocea macgregori*) is known to inhabit the marine fringes of Broad Sound. Habitat occupied by the Yellow Chat is threatened by modifications to water flow and construction of barriers (by dams, levee banks or ponded pastures) within tidal areas where the subspecies occurs.

The EIS acknowledges it may impact the World Heritage Area but then it is concluded that there will be no significant impact to the World Heritage Area despite the lack of modelling and lack of information on sediment and nutrient loads.

We have just been made aware (March 2018) that the application for this development has been withdrawn.

http://waratahcoal.com/portfolio_item/styx-coal-project/

<https://www.ehp.qld.gov.au/management/impact-assessment/eis-processes/styx-coal-project.html>

Turtle Cove Haven Retirement Village

The idea of the planned Turtle Cove Haven Retirement Village on the Fraser Coast is to merge the concepts of creating a lifestyle village for traditional aged care retirement living with integrated

and allied aged and health services. While we strongly support the concept and understand the need for high quality retirement facilities, this must not be at the expense of valuable wetlands.

<http://new.riverheads.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Turtle-Cove-Haven-Retirement-Village.pdf>



The planned development overlaid onto an aerial photograph

The development location on the shore line adjoining the Great Sandy Strait includes threatened ecological communities, threatened species (green turtle and dugong) and migratory species (associated with a critical shorebird roost) which are both features of the environmental values of the Great Sandy Strait RAMSAR Area and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Heritage Area.

The Booral wetlands that immediately adjoin the proposed development and are likely to experience cumulative impacts potentially resulting in loss of this seagrass meadow due to changes to groundwater flow and surface / groundwater quality. The wetlands are considered the most significant seagrass meadow, within the most important dugong habitat south of Torres Strait.
<http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/places/world/great-barrierreef/values.html>

Serious consideration needs to be given to the direct, consequential and cumulative impacts of the proposed development on the the adjacent wetlands, the impact on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Heritage Area and on migratory shorebirds.

We are not opposed to development but we are opposed to developments where the impacts are not assessed or where habitat for endangered and vulnerable species is damaged and destroyed. Please consider writing to your local Member of Parliament to express your concern over ill-considered coastal developments before it is too late.

Bioblitz on Tamborine Mountain

Be a citizen scientist for a day and join experienced naturalists and ecologists at Skywalk, Tamborine Mountain on 11-13th March to find and identify as much flora and fauna as possible. This is organised by the Scenic Rim Branch of Wildlife Qld and is sponsored by the Scenic Rim Regional Council. Contact Ronda (0447 077725) or email to scenicrim@wildlife.org.

Incorporation

PTBA Inc now formally exists with transfers completed and a bank account established in the name of the entity. We are actively involved in and/or support actions to prevent inappropriate developments that endanger and damage important habitat that supports rare , endangered and vulnerable species.

The following issues are under consideration and will be addressed in future newsletters.

Moreton Resources Coal Mine at Kingaroy.

A survey in the Galilee Basin.

The Darling Downs Pipeline - an extension of the Jemena Pipeline between the Northern Territory and Mt Isa.

The Chair is Dr Stephen Prowse, stephenjprorowse@gmail.com, 0419371134

The Secretary is Sheena Gillman, sheenagillman@gmail.com, 0409268076