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Regional Director
Department of Environment and Science
PO Box 2066
Cairns QLD 4870

BY POST / EMAIL – ParkManagementPlans@des.qld.gov.au

Dear Sir/ Madam,

Response to Land Management Plan for the East Trinity Reserve for Environmental Purposes

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a response to the draft Land Management Plan - East Trinity Reserve for Environmental Purposes (draft plan).

The Urban Development Institute of Australia Queensland (the Institute) shares the State's desire to create jobs, particularly in regional Queensland where unemployment rates are unacceptably high. In Far North Queensland, tourism is a critical economic driver, income generator and job creator. The development industry is also a critical economic driver with the industry directly responsible for 7 percent of the Cairns employment, and \$1,976 million of the Gross Regional Product (GRP)¹.

The Institute has reviewed the draft plan and has the following key comments:

- The draft plan does not establish the satisfactory future arrangements to address the toxic characteristics of the site
- Proposes uses that may preclude or make it more difficult to address the degraded site characteristics or allow other uses
- The draft plan has not addressed the larger economic opportunities that the site presents.

Site condition

The Institute is concerned the site is far from rehabilitated. The site is mostly weed infested and still subject to an annual lime program to help contain the existing massive acid sulphate problem, managed and paid for by government and tax-payers². The site is very degraded land that is a serious contingent liability to the government and community.

¹ The Institute's Research Foundation - The Contribution of the Development Industry to Queensland, Urbis, March 2018

² <https://www.qld.gov.au/environment/land/management/soil/acid-sulfate/east-trinity>

The Institute understands, the site was originally low grass, sand dune and tidal flats before being leased for cane production. As the site was earthworked and drained and a bund wall constructed to keep the tidal movements out of the productive areas, the soils dried, sunk, cracked and exposed acid sulphate materials below. The site became unproductive and abandoned. Melaleucas and other plants started to establish over the site before the bund walls deteriorated, and were then breached to allow the tidal process to resume. This process killed the Melaleuca and other coastal plants in the area and have likely exacerbated the acid sulphate problems. This is reflected in Cairns Shipping Development Project Environmental Impact Study (EIS)³. The Institute notes that the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) identified that capping of the site was appropriate for rehabilitation⁴.

Recently the Cairns Shipping Development Project Environmental Impact Study has proposed using a section of East Trinity for the placement of marine sediment, complying with the Government's requirement for the beneficial re-use of marine sediment on land. While not being progressed, the need for the shipping channel to be expanded in the future remains, and use of East Trinity for containing dredge spoil remains viable.

The Institute understands the Cairns Regional Council has given development approval for the Mandingalbay Yidinji Aboriginal Corporation's eco-tourism project, which will develop a long strip of land that is about 9.5Ha in area of the site. The venture is a \$40 million zip line tower tourist attraction and educational establishment. The Institute is concerned that the proposal will make it more difficult to achieve a holistic solution to the degraded situation of the site.

Future Opportunities

The city and region are forecast to more than double in population by 2045. Considerations for the draft plan should respond to the city's needs for the longer term. The following are key growth issues and opportunities relevant to the East Trinity site:

- The Draft Plan does not address the potential for expansion of the adjacent City of Cairns port. As the city grows, by 2045 the port will double its capacity
- The site has been identified as a potential site for deposit of silt from dredging for the port that would cap and address the acid sulphate issue and provide an urban development potential
- The site has the potential for in excess of 7,700 residential allotments in a location more central to Cairns compared to other long term urban growth locations
- There is substantial potential for industrial and commercial uses such as warehousing, freight handling, transport and logistics depots, container yards and marine industry precincts in association with the port that could provide 8000 jobs
- The residential, industrial, wharf and premium harbourside urban development of the East Trinity site could support a \$4 billion project.

Issues that also should be addressed by the draft plan

The land management plan should also address the following issues:

- ensure development and associated activities do not adversely impact on the safety, viability or efficiency of existing operations at a strategic port. Development should also not prevent port operations from expanding in the future.
- maintains a buffer between development on strategic port land and any sensitive land use on land surrounding a strategic port, ensuring that development in proximity to a port does not interfere with an aid to navigation or create a hazard to maritime safety. This separation ensures that ports can operate

³ Environmental Impact Statement – Part D: East Trinity Environmental Factors Ports North, November 2014 -

<http://eisdocs.dsdip.qld.gov.au/Cairns%20Shipping%20Development/EIS/Part%20D/d-east-trinity-environmental-factors.pdf>

⁴ East Trinity Acid Sulfate Soils Part 1: Environmental Hazards, April 1999 - <http://www.clw.csiro.au/publications/technical99/tr14-99.pdf>

safely and efficiently and minimises the risk of adverse impacts on surrounding development from environmental emissions or in the event of a safety incident at the port.

- Any proposed use of the land at the East Trinity Reserve should ensure that the proposed use does not conflict with the existing port operations by ensuring land affected by environmental emissions from a strategic port is developed for compatible development where possible or if developed for sensitive land uses, the use achieves acceptable levels of amenity.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft plan. In summary, the Institute's key comments included:

- The draft plan does not establish the satisfactory future arrangements to address the toxic characteristics of the site
- Propose uses that may preclude or make it more difficult to address the degraded site characteristics or allow other uses
- The draft plan has not addressed the larger economic opportunities that the site presents.

The Institute would appreciate a response to the matters raised in this submission. If there is any matter that you wish to discuss, please contact Institute Cairns Branch President, Adam Gowlett cairns@udiaqld.com or Martin Zaltron on mzaltron@udiaqld.com.au or 3229 1589.

Yours sincerely,

Urban Development Institute of Australia Queensland



Kirsty Chessher-Brown
Chief Executive Officer