

TOWNSVILLE OCEAN TERMINAL

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT SUBMISSION RESPONSE

RESPONSE TO DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES

August 2008

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES

Note: This submission response document has been prepared by means of duplicating the individual submission received and inserting response clauses where relevant.

1.2 CONSULTATION AND SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The Department of Communities comments derive from our legislative or policy interests in the areas of: ageing, child care, young people, children and families, disaster recovery management, community engagement, people with disabilities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Department's responsibilities involve ensuring that issues impinging on the sustainable well being of communities are adequately considered in project assessment and in the development of mitigation strategies.

The Department's comments follow below.

1.2.1 Consultation and Social Impact Assessment:

a) The Terms of Reference required that:

"the social impact assessment of the project consider the information gathered in the community consultation program and the analysis of the existing socio-economic environment, and describe the project's impact, both beneficial and adverse, on the local community. The impacts of the project on local and regional residents, community services and recreational activities are to be analysed and discussed for all stages of the development. The nature and extent of the community consultation program are to be described and a summary of the results incorporated in the EIS.The assessment of impacts should describe the likely response of affected communities and identify possible beneficial and adverse impacts (both immediate and cumulative). These impacts should be considered both at the regional and local level.For identified impacts to social values, suggest mitigation and enhancement strategies and facilitate initial negotiations towards acceptance of these strategies. Practical monitoring regimes should also be recommended."

b) Despite the requirement of the Terms of Reference for the proponent to report on "the impacts of the project on local and regional residents" this office has found it difficult to gain a clear understanding of the views of particularly local residents and stakeholders who are likely to be immediately affected by the project in construction and operational phases.

c) It should be noted that there is some ambivalence in the Social Impact Assessment reports about the expression "local community". The EIS in one instance refers to the "the local community in Townsville" (TOT Social impact Assessment p.3). The "community survey" has been conducted with respondents in both Townsville and Thuringowa. Table 1 of the Community Survey Report indicates that 50.1 % of the respondents came from Thuringowa. The expression the "Greater Townsville region" is used in conjunction with the community survey (Transpac SIA - p.78)

d) Another analysis used in the SIA breaks the Townsville and Thuringowa communities into "primary, secondary and tertiary catchments". Appendix 3 of the SIA describes a "Local Impacted Residents Survey".

- e) The “Local Impacted Residents Survey” consisted of a “self-complete survey of residents living on the Strand in close proximity to the Townsville Port and on Sir Leslie Thiess Drive”. Apparently the survey was “implemented to gauge their views and expectations regarding living in proximity to the port and the amenity and dis-amenity experiences”. This survey is a potentially useful planning tool, however, its’ inclusion in the Social Impact Assessment of the EIS under the heading “Local Impacted Residents Survey” and “Local Resident’s Survey” is potentially misleading. The impacts being surveyed are those from the current port on existing local residents, not the impact on local residents of the construction and operations of the Townsville Ocean Terminal.
- f) It is difficult to draw any firm conclusions from this survey regarding impacts of the Townsville Ocean Terminal project on local residents. It is unclear whether this survey actually sought the views of local residents about the construction and operational phases of the Townsville Ocean Terminal project. The survey, on the face of it, was dedicated to assessing resident’s views about the current port operations. It is unknown whether residents were informed about potentially problematic activities of the Townsville Ocean Terminal project such as the proponent’s preferred approach to haulage of materials to and from the project site, that is, by using a temporary bridge from the Strand over Ross Creek. Consequently, the resident’s views about this or other aspects of the Townsville Ocean Terminal are unclear.
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Recorded Concerns

Construction and Engineering	18	
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Traffic	29	(TOT SIA p73)

- h) It is not possible to effectively assess the exact nature of community concerns from the table above. It is also unclear whether affected residents were fully informed of the range of works being assessed such as the transport options being considered by the project proponent.
- i) One of the community groups potentially most affected by the proponent’s preferred haul route are the residents and users of the Townsville Motor Boat Club marina. It appears that they were not directly consulted in the “Local Impacted Residents Survey” (about the current Port). It is unclear whether they were included in the mail-out for the “Open Invitation to Comment”. There appears to be no evidence that they, individually or as a group, have expressed a view about the project. The range of views of the Port of Townsville operators and users are difficult to find clearly represented in the report.
- j) Given the general absence of clear feedback from stakeholders living locally and likely to be immediately affected by the construction and operational phases of the project it is difficult to understand the basis for the assertion in the SIA that:

“There will be minimal impacts on nearby residents during the construction period. The distance of the construction site from established residents will go a long way towards mitigation how noise etc. will impact on Strand user and nearby residents. The proposed haulage of materials via a temporary bridge across Ross Creek will further minimise the scope of impacts on residents and road users.” (TOT SIA p5)

- k) Some of the conclusions drawn from the Community (Telephone) Survey are puzzling. For example, in Section 4.5 of the SIA report, headed “Onsite Impacts During Construction”, it is reported that:

“Respondents were asked to indicate the potential impact of the proposed Ocean Terminal and residential and marina development on their use of the Strand and the Breakwater Precinct. Overall, the large majority of respondents felt this integrated development would have none or a slightly positive impact on their use of these areas. In terms of the perceived impacts on the respondents use of the Strand during construction, almost half of all respondents (48.4%) felt the integrated development would have no impact on usage while a further one-third (31.8%) thought there would be a slight positive impact on their use of the Strand [Figure 25]. A similar impact was reported by respondents in respect of perceived impacts of construction of the integrated development on the respondents use of the Breakwater Precinct with more than half of all respondents (52.6%) of the opinion there would be neither a negative nor positive impact and a further quarter of all respondents (25.7%) indicating they believed would be a slight positive impact on their use of the Breakwater Precinct during this construction phase [Figure 26].” (TOT Community Survey Report, p61).

- l) The report appears to be claiming that 31.8% of respondents thought there would be a slight positive impact on their use of the Strand during the construction phase of the project. Given that there will inevitably be increased traffic flow in the Eastern end of the Strand during construction it is unclear why respondents think this will allow “a slight positive impact on their use of the Strand”. Another group apparently feel they will derive a “slight positive impact” from construction on the Breakwater.

RESPONSE

The Proponent notes the observations of the Department of Communities and responds as follows:

- **The attitudes of residents across Townsville towards the project were gauged through a number of mechanisms. These included:**
 - **Telephone survey of Townsville and Thuringowa residents;**
 - **Self-complete survey of local residents (those residing at #1 and #3 The Strand and on Sir Leslie Thiess Drive);**
 - **Self-complete consultation feedback form, distributed to residents of South Townsville, Railway Estate, North Ward, CBD and Belgian Gardens via unaddressed Australia Post delivery;**
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- In general, based on the results of the telephone survey, the majority of residents across Townsville and Thuringowa were supporting of the proposed development (refer to statistical details in Volume 2 of the original Social Impact Assessment Report). While the level of support fell the closer the respondent was located to the project site (and vice versa), at no stage did support for the project fall below opposition to the project.
- Issues raised by respondents during the telephone survey as reasons for support/opposition to the project were clearly identified in the reports. These issues, such as employment benefits, impacts on tourism etc. on the one hand and concerns about environmental impacts and impacts on local traffic during and post-construction on the other, were identified and reported in the statistical study. These issues were also highlighted from responses received from the self-complete consultation feedback form, where residents – in support and opposition to the project – provided comment and feedback. Adverse comments and issues were also raised in open by participants at the public forum; a number of project supporters privately offered positive feedback after the forum but were intimidated by the format to express their position openly.
- The results of the survey of local residents on experiences of living in an area that is proximate to the Port of Townsville was specifically aimed at establishing a baseline understanding of existing attitudes and experiences that would assist in assessing potential impacts of the Port on Breakwater Cove residents and vice versa. This survey had no other purpose.
- Possible route haulage options were not canvassed with specific groups, as the route options were not confirmed until late in the piece. The original Social Impact Assessment therefore undertook a desktop assessment of potential impacts, but did not undertake a direct engagement with impacted stakeholders. In preparing responses for this Supplementary EIS, a multi-criteria assessment of the haulage route options has been undertaken and is presented in the Flanagan Consulting Group Report at Appendix A8 in Volume 2.
- All residents, including those living along the Strand and in nearby proximity to the project site, had a range of avenues by which their views could be canvassed. The absence of detailed feedback from these residents (per point J above) could be interpreted as evidence that nearby residents generally did not have any strong reservations about the proposed development and specifically about its construction impacts. Where issues were raised subsequently e.g. noise/vibration impacts of haulage trucks on #1 The Strand, these have been addressed through this Supplementary EIS phase.
- The Department expressed puzzlement at certain survey outcomes (comments K and L above). In undertaking and reporting on a statistical study of attitudes, the consultants did not seek to rationalise public attitudes per se, but rather report the results to assist in broader deliberations of project impacts and merits. Some survey respondents may have responded by indicating likely impacts on their usage of the Strand in ways that prima facie appear 'irrational' but it would be inappropriate for social researchers to ascribe rationality or otherwise to attitudinal responses as gathered during the telephone survey. That is, what may appear 'irrational' to one may actually be quite 'rational' for another. So, for example, that some respondents indicated that their visitation to the Breakwater Precinct is likely to increase during project construction may reflect their personal interests and preferences for observing major civil construction projects in progress.

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