

## **TOWNSVILLE OCEAN TERMINAL**

# **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT SUBMISSION RESPONSE**

## **RESPONSE TO TOWNSVILLE REGION BIRD OBSERVERS CLUB**

**August 2008**

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## TOWNSVILLE REGION BIRD OBSERVERS CLUB

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

The following details TRBOC's comments views on the Environmental Impact Statement for the Townsville Ocean Terminal project.

**Summary:** It would appear that the consultant has not conducted a field study of the area as required by the EIS terms of reference. This is highlighted in the fact that the Consultant has concluded that sections of the existing infrastructure are a constructed marine site and therefore does not hold terrestrial fauna. In fact Sooty Oystercatchers, listed as rare under State legislation reside in this area.

### TRBOC Comments on the Environmental Impact Statement.

TRBOC's comments in regards to the Consultant's response to the EIS Terms of Reference which details requirements for a study of Terrestrial Fauna relate to the Nature Conservation Study (NCS) section 1.12. entitled Terrestrial Fauna.

The EIS Terms of Reference (ToR) states:

*"The terrestrial fauna occurring within the Project area and in areas affected by material extraction should be described noting the broad distribution patterns in relation to vegetation, topography and substrate. A field investigation should be undertaken and a description of the fauna present or likely to be present in the area should be provided.*

*This field investigation should cover a range of issues including "existence of any rare, threatened or other wise noteworthy species communities in the study area, including discussion of range, habitat, breeding, recruitment, feeding and movement requirements, and current level of protection (e.g. any requirements of Protected Area Management Plans); and use of the area by migratory birds, nomadic birds, fish and terrestrial fauna."*

In response to this requirement the consultant makes a simple statement "The site is a constructed marine site. No terrestrial fauna is associated with the area." TRBOC strongly object to this response; it is too simplistic and factually incorrect.

While the site is a constructed marine site, it has been in place for many years and now provides vital habitat for a number of more uncommon bird species. Sooty Oystercatcher, Reef Egrets and Striated Herons regularly use this area to feed and roost, particularly the rock construction associated with the port breakwater adjacent to the mouth of Ross Creek. Of particular concern is the Sooty Oystercatcher as it favours the rocky outlets formed by the breakwater structures. It is classified as Rare under the Nature Conservation Act.

TRBOC has monitored this site for 12 years and it is one of the only sites in the Townsville Region that holds these birds as there are few other favourable rocky sites. The destruction of the break walls will have a major effect on these birds. It is clearly incorrect for the Consultant to conclude there is "no terrestrial fauna associated with the area" and by doing so his report fails to address the true impact of the development on the listed bird species that live in this area.

### Conclusion

We believe the Consultant should be made to withdraw the statement *"The site is a constructed marine site. No terrestrial fauna is associated with the area."* and conduct a field investigation as specified in the EIS terms of reference. Any such study will confirm the true situation of this area in respect of terrestrial fauna and we believe will demonstrate the need for compensatory structures to be included in the final design of the project.

Any loss or degradation of habitat like the break walls could well see the loss of the Sooty Oystercatchers and other birds from the area.

## RESPONSE

The TRBOC Conclusion comments are noted.

As part of the Townsville Ocean Terminal project, Supplementary Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) process, an Avifauna field investigation study was commissioned and a subsequent report provided by Natural Solutions Environment Consultants Pty Ltd. The report is tabled as an internal Appendix B, to the broader Draft Nature Conservation Report at Appendix A14 in Volume 2.

The field investigation study was undertaken by Dr Justin Watson (Director, Natural Solutions), who has a PhD in Ecology, and completed many years research in Ornithology, and is familiar with birds of Queensland and Townsville.

The field investigation confirmed the project site is a constructed marine site, which supports a small number of bird species, with even fewer utilising or likely to utilise the site regularly.

Specifically, the field investigation identified that in relation to threatened species (e.g. Little Tern & Sooty Oystercatcher), known to occasionally utilise the site, the Townsville Ocean Terminal site does not form part of their critical habitat.

The site is not a significant habitat critical to their survival, and a series of management recommendations (mitigation measures) are outlined to minimise potential temporary impacts during project construction.

These recommendations are acknowledged and will be considered as part of the pre-construction detailed planning process and in developing the Construction Management Plan.

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