

TOONDAH SAVE THE BAY

Toondah Harbour FACT SHEET

The problem

The private development proposal for Toondah Harbour will encroach on internationally important Ramsar listed wetlands, and if approved will set a dangerous precedent for future developments of Ramsar wetlands within Australia and internationally.

The development will include 3,600 residential dwellings and a 200-berth marina as part of a mixed use residential, commercial, retail and tourism precinct.

For the development to proceed a large area of Ramsar wetlands will be permanently destroyed, including important feeding habitat for the Critically Endangered Eastern Curlew and other migratory shorebirds.

Alarmingly, the proponent is arguing that this destructive development can be considered “wise use” of Ramsar wetlands.

The Australian Department of Environment concedes that this level of private development within Ramsar wetlands is unprecedented and the impacts to the Ramsar wetlands will be difficult to mitigate and offset.

How did we get here?

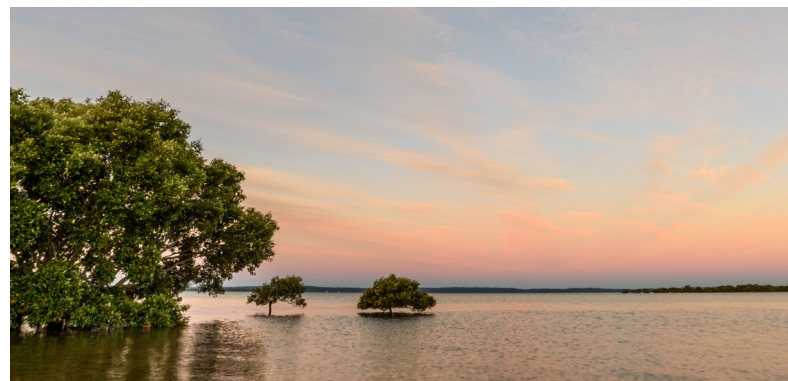
The development of Toondah Harbour has been tainted from the beginning. From the local council that lobbied for the development with limited community consultation to the Campbell Newman Government that declared the site a Priority Development Area (PDA) decision makers at all levels of government have been either ignorant of or worse, indifferent to the Ramsar Wetlands that will be impacted.

In 2013, upon the request of the Redland City Council, the Liberal Government of Campbell Newman declared Toondah Harbour as a PDA to upgrade the harbour facilities and infrastructure. In the “interest of economic development”, PDAs allow for fast-tracked planning assessment – they reduce accountability and transparency, including by removing public appeal rights to challenge the development in court.

After three separate referrals from the proponent, that were subject to extraordinary discretionary ministerial

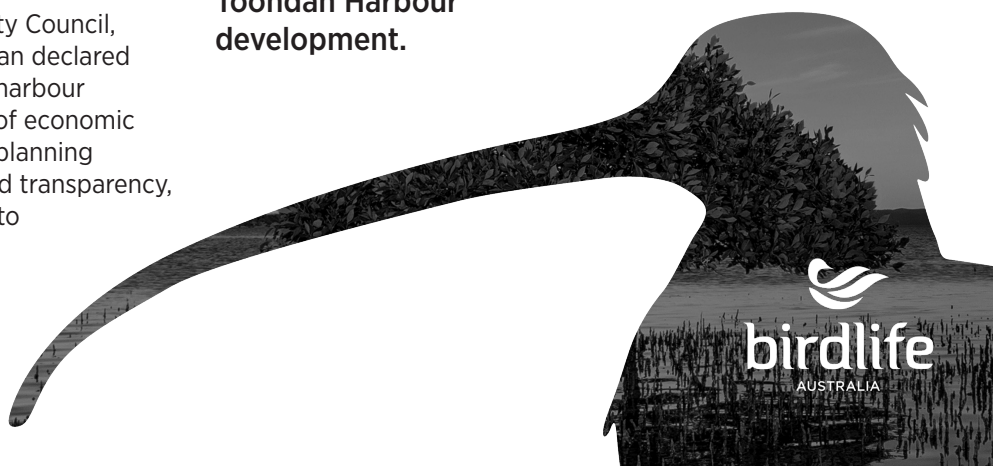
decision making by the Federal Minister for the Environment, the development is currently being assessed through an Environmental Impact Statement.

However, the Queensland Government has the power to revoke the PDA and also limit, prevent or refuse this inappropriate development of the Ramsar wetland.



The solution

Australia must uphold its national and international obligations to protect migratory shorebirds, threatened species, and Ramsar wetlands of international importance. Queensland can signal its environmental leadership in protecting these amazing Australian birds and the places they live by stopping the inappropriate Toondah Harbour development.



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Eastern Curlew by Duade Paton

Eastern Curlew FACT SHEET

Internationally Important Wetlands

In 1971, Australia was one of the first signatories to the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention) an international treaty to work towards the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions. Australia designated the world's first Ramsar Wetland (Coburg Peninsula) and now recognises 66 Ramsar Wetlands across the country, including Moreton Bay.

Moreton Bay was designated as a Ramsar Wetland due to its importance to biodiversity by providing valuable habitat for whales and dolphins, marine turtles, dugongs and for regularly supporting over 30,000 migratory shorebirds which depend on Moreton Bay's intertidal feeding areas and high tide roost sites.

Protecting and managing Ramsar wetlands is a collaborative effort between the Federal, state and local governments. Queensland has a responsibility to conserve these special places and be a champion for the birds that call them home.

As well as a Ramsar Wetland, Moreton Bay is internationally recognised as Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) and is one of 144 Flyway Network Sites recognised by the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership, indicating the site's global significance for conserving migratory shorebirds across the Flyway.

The birds of Moreton Bay

Moreton Bay is home to over 28 species of migratory shorebirds including seven species that are nationally threatened with extinction. The largest of these shorebirds, the Critically Endangered Eastern Curlew is recognised as a flagship species, where conservation actions that protect the Eastern Curlew will also benefit other migratory shorebirds and conversely impacts on the Eastern Curlew will affect other migratory shorebirds.

Approximately 70% of the world's population of Eastern Curlew spend the majority of the year in Australia during their non-breeding season, with the coast of Queensland being particularly important. BirdLife Australia has identified 40 significant sites for Eastern Curlew in Queensland and Moreton Bay is the single most important site for the species and supports almost 7% of the world's population.

Eastern Curlews use their long bills to access prey that is too deep in the mud for most predators to reach and have a high site fidelity, where they return to the same feeding grounds each year. Unfortunately, historic and ongoing development around Moreton Bay has resulted in the loss of large areas of their feeding and roosting habitat and we do not know how to re-create their feeding habitat. Every piece of habitat that is destroyed means less food for Eastern Curlews.

This makes it even more important that we should protect their remaining strongholds, starting with Moreton Bay.

The area earmarked for the Toondah Harbour development is part of a network of feeding and roosting habitats that support over 500 Eastern Curlews and thousands of other shorebirds. Destruction of parts of this network, and the increased human disturbance that comes with a development of this size, could result in the abandonment of larger areas of habitat.

As a result, the proposed Toondah Harbour development would substantially contribute to the ongoing decline of Eastern Curlews feeding and roosting in Moreton Bay and along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway.



Eastern Curlew by Simon Blanchflower