

Joint Submission
by
Cassowary Coast Regional Council and The Cardwell Chamber Of Commerce
to
Mr Nicholas Dametto, Member for Hinchinbrook
regarding the One Mile Creek Dredging
and the
former Port Hinchinbrook in Liquidation Development
at Cardwell, Queensland.

15 March 2024




Contact us:

CASSOWARY COAST REGIONAL COUNCIL

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Cassowary Coast Regional Council, together with the Cardwell Chamber of Commerce, Cardwell community and stakeholders, is seeking a commitment from all levels of government to work together to fully address -

- 1) the need to have a permanent solution for all-tide and all-weather access (ongoing dredging and maintenance) in One Mile Creek, Cardwell and*
- 2) to proactively seek new and innovative investment attraction models for the former Port Hinchinbrook in Liquidation development.*

Council and the Chamber ask that a strategic working group with relevant senior and executive level departmental, ministerial and government representatives and relevant stakeholders (including the Chamber) is implemented; with the working group proactively engaging with community and stakeholders to investigate funding and investment opportunities, taking an innovative community-led approach.

Located half-way between Cairns and Townsville in the heart of UNESCO World Heritage environments of the Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef, Cardwell has faced much adversity over recent years. The Cardwell community has shown great resilience to meet the challenges of the 2009 **Global Financial Crisis**, 2011 **Severe Tropical Cyclone Yasi** (Category 5), the **COVID** pandemic and **Port Hinchinbrook marina** and resort development **twice being placed into liquidation** between 2013 and 2017.

In 2011 Severe Tropical Cyclone Yasi devastated Cardwell with damage to 75% of the town's buildings, destruction of Port Hinchinbrook Marina, most crops wiped out, a population decline of about 15% and over 30 small businesses closing since the cyclone.

Approved in 1995, the Port Hinchinbrook resort and marina development (which included the development and dredging of One Mile Creek) provided a focal point for economic development in Cardwell and surrounds and was acknowledged as vital infrastructure especially with a focus on post-Yasi recovery. However, the resort remains closed and, currently, is no more than a collection of abandoned assets fronting a once-thriving marina.

All-tide access via One Mile Creek is severely limited and, since Severe Tropical Cyclone Yasi, this has been progressively worsening through increased siltation in the channel, with vessels predominately only able to operate within a small window either side of high tide. This situation is having substantial socio-economic impacts within Cardwell and the broader Cassowary Coast community.

Cardwell is known as the Gateway to Hinchinbrook Island (*Munamudanamy*) National Park and is predominately a marine-based tourism economy comprised of recreational fishers, marine tourism operators, nature-based visitors and also a small professional fishing industry, with the majority of businesses in Cardwell both directly and indirectly servicing these industries. The current status of One Mile Creek continues to cause detriment to the Cardwell economy with the decline in recreational fishers and visitors and the lack of access to marine berths.

Marine tourism and recreational fishing are valuable contributors to the economy of Cardwell and Queensland in general. For an estimated total expenditure on recreational fishing of \$627.60m, the total recreational fishing related contribution to GSP in Queensland was \$333.72m in 2019/20, with \$138.36m generated by recreational fishing directly and \$195.36m supported in other sectors of the state economy through flow-on effects. Total recreational fishing related contribution to employment in Queensland was an estimated 3,135.7 fte jobs in 2019/20, with 1,549.0 fte jobs generated by

recreational fishing directly and 1,586.7 fte jobs supported in other sectors of the state economy through flow-on effects¹.

Queensland has experienced an uplift in demand for marina berths with the Aurelius Marine Research Report showing that boat registrations grew 2.9% in 2021. The coastal market north of Bundaberg has critical supply issues for marina berths. Queensland has 979,000 people with boat licences and 274,000 registered boats.

With the lack of all-tide access, Cardwell businesses are hamstrung in their efforts to participate in economic opportunities that marine tourism and recreational fishing offers. Cardwell tourism and accommodation operators continue to experience declining occupancy rates and turnover with visitors advising that they are bypassing Cardwell specifically due to the lack of all-tide access.

In addition to the economic stressors caused primarily by the lack of all-tide access at One Mile Creek, there is also the psychological impacts on business owners and operators and the broader community with an increasing sense of helplessness and frustration in response to the ongoing issues which continue to be unresolved since Severe Tropical Cyclone Yasi in 2011.

There are opportunities for diversification with nature-based tourism, however, Council and the Chamber believes that the essence of Cardwell, both historically and in the future, is focused on the marine tourism opportunities which can be further exploited in parallel to diversification of tourism attractions and products. This cannot occur without all-tide access.

The recent announcement by the Queensland Government of \$3.2 million over 4 years to enhance the Thorsborne Trail on Hinchinbrook Island National Park is further recognition of the importance of the need for all-tide access to enable Cardwell and Cassowary Coast businesses, Traditional Owners and community to fully exploit the additional opportunities directly resulting from this investment.

The lack of all-tide access at Cardwell has the potential to **cause safety issues** should the Coast Guard be called upon to carry out a rescue and their **vessel cannot be launched due to tidal restrictions**.

The efforts of government and community are acknowledged through the funding provided for the Port Hinchinbrook Normalisation and the Emergency Dredging. However, the issues of ongoing dredging of One Mile Creek and the future of the former Port Hinchinbrook marina and on-shore facilities remain critical issues to be addressed for Cardwell and the Cassowary Coast region.

Council and the Chamber acknowledge that these are complex matters and require additional and substantial investment, and that the current liquidator also needs to be at the table as part of this process. It is also acknowledged that this will not be an easy journey, however, for Cardwell to thrive and leverage the sustainable economic opportunities that this unique location provides, it is **essential that Cardwell has the enabling all-tide marine access and infrastructure**.

Cassowary Coast Regional Council and the Cardwell Chamber of Commerce respectfully request that government representatives, agencies and stakeholders treat this request as a high priority, and we look forward to working collaboratively with stakeholders for the benefit of our region.

Yours faithfully



Andrew Graffen
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Robyn Smith
CHAMBER PRESIDENT

¹ Economic Contribution of Recreational Fishing by Queenslanders to Queensland. Prepared by BDO EconSearch

Cardwell's lost businesses/trades and services

| Business | Type of Service | No. of employees |
|---|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Hinchinbrook Island Resort | Accommodation | 4 |
| Hinchinbrook Island Ferries & Marina Office | Tourism | 6 |
| Accom @ Port Hinchinbrook | Accommodation | 3 |
| Restaurant @ Marina | Food/Beverage | 6 |
| Place Properties | Real Estate | 2 |
| La Rochelle Art and Gifts | Retail | 2 |
| Adrian's Small Motor Repairs | Trade | 1 |
| Port Of Call (ME) | Fuel/Retail | 2 |
| Port of Call (AS) | Fuel/Retail | 2 |
| Boab Boat Hire | Tourism | 2 |
| GBR Charters | Tourism | 2 |
| Backpackers Hostel | Accommodation | 2 |
| Taxi | Service | 2 |
| Hinchinbrook Real Estate | Real Estate | 3 |
| Neater Constructions | Trade | 6 |
| Cardwell Hire | Retail | 2 |
| Beechies Café | Food/Beverage | 4 |
| Sweet Surprise Bakery | Food/Beverage | 4 |
| Cow Hide Shop | Retail | 1 |
| Vivia Café | Food/Beverage | 6 |
| Seafood Shop & Café | Food/Beverage | 2 |
| Mandy Bacon Hairdresser | Service | 3 |
| Anything Marine | Retail | 2 |
| Master Bait | Retail | 1 |
| Hinchinbrook Hop (Spicy Bite) | Food/Beverage | 3 |
| Oz Lubes | Retail | 1 |
| Ryan Moody Fishing | Tourism | 2 |
| Casabella Ladies Fashion | Retail | 1 |
| Fish & Chips (Mary Cini) | Food/Beverage | 1 |
| Kennedy Store | Fuel/Retail | 2 |
| Rolly Refrigeration Mechanic | Trade | 1 |
| Eddy – Mechanic | Trade | 1 |
| AirCon Kleens | Service | 1 |
| Ray Carucci Plumbing | Trade | 2 |
| Spina Kyle Waldon (once per week) | Service | 1 |
| Optometrist (once per week) | Service | 1 |
| Medical Centre (temporarily re-opened) | Medical | 6 |



Cardwell Beachcomber Motel & Tourist Park



02 March 2024

To Whom it may concern

We wish to bring to your attention the impact the lack of maintenance dredging at One Mile Creek is having on our accommodation business.

We have experienced a **decline in the number of days booked as well as the number of travellers** in general wishing to fish the beautiful Hinchinbrook Channel and Reef over the past few years.

Notwithstanding the impact of Covid to our occupancy, **by far the largest contributor to the downturn in our business is the deterioration of the access to Hinchinbrook channel at the One Mile Creek boat ramp.**

Potential bookings are lost when we are asked if the access has been dredged.

The fishermen currently require a level of at least 1.6m to safely launch and retrieve their craft. This means they have a small window on either side of the high tides to navigate from the boat ramp to the entrance.

Occupancy in December 2022, compared to December 2021 **plummeted by a whopping 40%**. The worst Christmas/New Year period ever at the Park!

The whole town is desperate to have One Mile Creek dredged. We urge you to help us find a solution toward recovery.

Yours sincerely

Desiree Lake

Manager

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QF23 CARDWELL

15th March 2024

To whom it may concern,

Re- dredging of One Mile Creek

From QF23 Cardwell Coastguard perspective, it seems strange that our flotilla will become a Marine Rescue Queensland (MRQ) unit in April 2025 and we don't have 24/7 access.

QF23 will be provided with a new Primary vessel at considerable cost. The Queensland Govt is spending a lot of time and money to ensure that we have exemplary Marine Safety.

The potential of Cardwell's MRQ unit if there is 24/7 access to the ramp:

- Ability to have a rescue vessel in the water within thirty minutes.
- Ambulance short response time as Cardwell has an ambulance station.
- A helipad adjacent to the ramp

The problems caused by lack of access due to silting in the state Government waterway, One Mile Creek, which needs dredging:

- Rescue vessels cannot be launched and retrieved for ten to twelve hours per day. This can mean up to a six hour wait to respond to an emergency.
- The Rescue Helicopter in Cairns is not always available.

Regards,
Ken English
Flotilla Commander Cardwell Coastguard.