# PHŒNIX!

NEWSLETTER OF
THE ALLIANCE TO SAVE HINCHINBROOK INC

## FOCUS ON PORTRAITS

On Friday 4th May this year, the Perc Tucker Gallery in Townsville exhibited the many portraits created for a competition related to local people and local stories.

One of the exhibitors was Catherine Bone, an artist biologist whose painting has been inspired by her love of wildlife. The professional work of Catherine and her husband Nigel Brothers took them to Antarctica, where they were active in wildlife protection as well as in science. They now live in Far North Queensland.

**Suzanne Smith's photo** (above) shows artist and subject alongside Catherine's sympathetic and stunningly inspiring portrait of Margaret Thorsborne, depicting her as scientist and conservationist, revealing her ethereally at one with the pigeons even as she counts them. The play of light and the predominantly blue tones mirror the penetrating gaze of Margaret's eyes as they follow the pigeons far into the future.

**John Buist's self-portrait** (above), its original bamboo frame lovingly restored by ASH member Liz Gallie, being returned to Margaret Thorsborne on the verandah of Margaret's new home. *Photographer unknown ...*

*Cardwell to Oyster Point: Hinchinbrook Island obscured by damp skies over a tattered foreshore, June 2011.*

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# ASH FLIGHT over the HINCHINBROOK CHANNEL October 2011

**AQUACULTURE PONDS (1)**

Streams carry waste from the prawn farms into the State Marine Park and the Hinchinbrook Channel.

Intense green of vegetation (species unknown) along the streams can be distinguished from cloud shadow.

The blackened vegetation is mostly mangroves,damaged by the extreme wave action of Cyclone Yasi.

*photo Margaret Moorhouse*

**AQUACULTURE PONDS (2)**

Looking north over prawn farms on the Hinchinbrook Channel. All are south of Mary Creek.

Intense green of vegetation along the streams used for prawn pond waste can be distinguished from cloud shadow.

Not all ponds are in production. Following disease outbreaks, ponds have to be emptied and treated before being used again for prawns.

*photo: Margaret Moorhouse*

**CYCLONE DAMAGED MANGROVES**

**Hecate Point** is the north west tip of Hinchinbrook Island, facing Cardwell; tide well down.

Even now, halfway through 2012, the mangrove forests on the mudflats off Hecate Point still have the blackened and dead look typical of vast areas of the Hinchinbrook Channel mangroves following Cyclone Yasi.

*photo: Margaret Moorhouse*

# COMMITTEE REPORT - THE YEAR 2011-2012

## THE YEAR 2011 - 2012

The year 2011-2012 was very difficult due to the disruptive aftermath of Cyclone Yasi and the travel demands of the fight to protect the Hinchinbrook region from the worst of the new Queensland Coastal Plan.

All the prohibitions of the 2004 statutory plans have been lost. The siting of marina developments is however still unresolved, for the whole Cassowary Coast.

**Committee membership:** Suzie Smith was co-opted onto the committee on 20 April 2012, to assist Margaret Thorsborne.

**Our President** Margaret Thorsborne has been (and is still) very occupied in local Cardwell matters, moving into her new dwelling, dealing with the huge work load in the aftermath of cyclone Yasi, and the unexpectedly sudden involvement of the Girringun Corporation in the national park and ranger station where she now lives. Her new home has 240V power, TV, and two wide verandahs already in use for meetings.

Margaret's general health continues good, although she is more bothered by the tropical heat and feels the need for more rest than in the past. She no longer enjoys driving other than locally.

**Our Vice President,** Margaret Moorhouse, had yet more arm surgery in late 2011 (result of an old injury), and has one more to go. Two eye operations followed, with long recovery times. For some time, reading print was almost impossible, and exhausting.

Margaret has continued to focus on the Yasi aftermath, the Coastal Plan and related matters, such as presenting to the UNESCO/World Heritage Committee team (Cairns, March 2012).

The committee apologises for the lack of newsletter; it just wasn't possible given Margaret's personal situation and the work and travel load associated with defending "our patch". All active conservationists throughout our area have experienced overload this year.

In the past, the Hinchinbrook Campaign was instrumental in protecting the GBR WHA coast from Wujal Wujal to Forrest Beach from further maritime and aquaculture/mariculture development.

In late 2011 the state government made verbal assurances that the Hinchinbrook Channel would not be revisited for maritime development planning. Nevertheless, a new government Maritime Development Area (MDA) methodology was discovered by chance, making it clear that MDA designation could be declared anywhere.

Ditto for another new development designation: Aquaculture Development Area (ADA).

It seems that the Hinchinbrook Channel may no longer be protected from inappropriate development activities such as aquaculture, mariculture, and marina development.

## SECRETARIAL AND TREASURY MATTERS

**Our Secretary and Treasurer**, Mal McLean, has continued to mind our money and manage our formal communications. Mal is using his own equipment and programs to provide this service to ASH. Thank you Mal!

Interest rates and communication costs continue to shift. Margaret Moorhouse's family has generously provided a mobile phone and assisted ASH for some years by covering all Margaret's calls to all Australian landlines. The new committee will decide if calls from land line to mobile and 1300 numbers would be more cost-effective via a separate prepaid mobile.

Margaret Moorhouse made a submission (2010) to the Commonwealth for administrative assistance under the GVEHO funding scheme. Although ASH did not receive a grant, we did eventually receive a letter saying that our organisation was eligible. That's a start.

## DOCUMENT SCANNING - *PLEASE HELP!*

## - *to reduce ASH storage needs and costs* -

The care of the collection now falls on Margaret Moorhouse, who has already sorted most files and discarded most duplicates to reduce the volume. Some paper documents - such as files received under Freedom of Information requests - are valuable only for their contents; the paper to be discarded **after scanning and safe electronic storage**.

Since the early 2000s, much of the Hinchinbrook Campaign Collection has been stored by members and helpers such as Bernie Collee, who supplied the plastic containers, and her sister Victoria; Chris Nash; Mal McLean; and Margaret Moorhouse. Two other ASH members (thank you Freya and Virginia) have assisted with scanning.

Part of the collection (the 1996 "Port Hinchinbrook" legal files and the Dungeness files) has been donated to James Cook University. Over the last two years, most of the remaining collection has been stored in an insulated and powered storage shed at $600 per year. Now part of the collection is in the new NQCC office, but we cannot count on this arrangement continuing.

When cyclone Anthony was threatening, and Cyclone Yasi already on its way, Margaret Moorhouse and Mal McLean both had yachts to secure - in Margaret's case her only home. Nevertheless, Margaret and Mal spent a frantic day transferring most of the ASH files to a new safer location 10 km away. The agent had been promising roof repairs for months, following serious leaks in the storage room roof. Some months later the process had to be reversed - after the roof had been properly repaired.

Margaret Thorsborne too, with help from friends, is working her way through her book and document collection much of which was water damaged during cyclone Yasi. #

## NOTICE TO MEMBERS

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

*to be held in*

**Cardwell**

*on*

**Friday 8th June at 2:00pm,**

**to be followed by a**

**GENERAL MEETING**

**At 2:30pm**

**For meeting location - please phone Margaret Thorsborne 07 40 668 537**

***If NOT attending in person,***

***PLEASE REMEMBER TO SEND YOUR PROXY!***

***Proxy forms are enclosed***

Margaret Thorsborne (past president for many years) has nominated for the position of President.

When cyclone Yasi ensured Suzie Smith's retirement from full time tropical fruit farming, Suzie accepted a position on the Committee and has nominated for the position of Vice President. Suzie is a Cassowary Awards winner and President of the Tully branch of the Wild Life Preservation Society.

Mal McLean has nominated as Secretary and Treasurer, and Margaret Moorhouse as a committee member.

### *Why such a small committee?*

ASH is strictly a "grass roots" association. The small committee reflects the historical need for rapid decision-making and local action. Other members may be co-opted or elected to committee as need arises.

Although official audit is no longer a legal requirement, ASH policy is that business be audited by a chartered accountant.

### *Membership receipts*

Your paper receipt will be enclosed with this (or later) newsletter.

### *New Membership*

ASH policy is to invite new memberships only with a recommendation from existing members or other trusted persons. The reason is to ensure that no improper use is made of our name and funds, such as has happened to some other groups. Given the wide geographical distribution of ASH members, it is also why your proxy is important at our formal meetings.

# GLIDERS CLING TO EXISTENCE

**Daryl Dickson interviewed By Nathalie Fernbach, ABC RN, 11 May 2012**

One of Australia's most endangered mammals may have been pushed closer to extinction by cyclone Yasi.

Fifteen months after cyclone Yasi, towns like Cardwell and Tully still clearly show the devastation the storm visited on homes and businesses.

It is harder to assess the damage that the cyclone has done to the homes of native wildlife with many areas still inaccessible.

Prior to the cyclone the Mahogany Glider (which is only found in coastal woodland between Ingham and Tully), was estimated to have a population of about 1500 animals.

Ms Dickson says it is hard to know how many animals have died as a result of the cyclone, but has concerns that inbreeding may occur if numbers get any lower as the glider's populations are in fragmented pockets.

"It also means that when animals are breeding well in those little islands of habitat that they can't disperse out into more habitat and the gene pool gets very narrow, so they are not mixing up the genes which keeps populations healthy."

Wildlife groups, locals, landowners and the state government have been working since the cyclone to provide additional feed and shelter for the gliders, however it is the preservation of habitat that will ultimately save the Mahogany Glider says Ms Dickson.

"And it doesn't mean to say that we can't farm and can't live here and can't have roads, but it means that when we plan these things we have got to try and think about these things that enrich our lives... still be able to live here too."

For the endangered Mahogany Glider the storm severely damaged many of the pockets of its already very limited habitat says Cardwell based wildlife carer Daryl Dickson.

"When we first looked at it, it looked catastrophic" she recalls.

"Not only has there been no blossom for over 13 months (it is only just starting now), but the habitat itself because we have developed so much of the area and it was so fragmented, it meant the storm had huge impacts on the forests where it has destroyed many of the old trees and much of the understorey as well."

# POST-YASI BRIEFS

## Oyster Point

The "buried" rock wall of 1996, built and rebuilt north of Stoney Creek to retain soils dumped in the intertidal zone as "land" for house blocks, is now scattered seawards across the state marine park. In the chaos after the cyclone a new tumbled rock wall was quickly built, using much larger rocks.

Most of the foreshore house block boundary pegs remain well below the high tide mark.

The access channel breakwalls have lost some height and definition, the fines and small rocks washed away.

Also washed away is much of the artificial "land" piled up on the northern point of Stoney Creek ("Grande Canal"). There can be no doubt that Keith Williams knew what he was doing when he built that high sacrificial mound there; despite what he said publicly, he was under no illusions as to the potential impacts of a cyclone on his "filled" foreshore blocks.

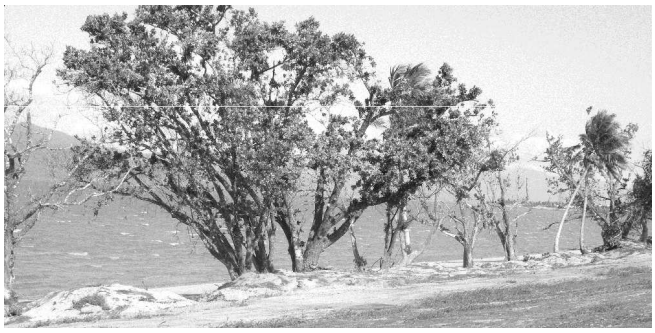
South of the southern breakwall, the accumulated Hinchinbrook Channel sediments have now built an extended mud bank (unrelated to Yasi), some of it almost to "drying height". Some of it has been colonised by mangroves. The sediment trapping function of the southern breakwall was apparently effective in convincing some people that the breakwalls had reduced the dredging costs down to 15% to 25% (as claimed by Keith Williams) but not enough to convince the Cassowary Coast Regional Council to take over the dredging.

The marina basin remains as before Yasi (silted up) and allegedly fouled with hundreds of tonnes of cyclone debris, preventing it from being dredged until the bottom is cleared. The insurance payout went to the financiers. No developer has shown interest in investing in the development.

The State government (that means all of us) has now paid for the dredging of the access channel to the public boat ramp on the basis of billing the developer, rather than on the basis that the developer would pay for it. Most of the Grande Canal is under the Canals Act, which means that the local Council will eventually be stuck with the costly problems of sedimentation and dredge spoil disposal.

How will the new State government view this failed development? No doubt developers are knocking on the doors of new ministers and power brokers expecting the usual amount of corporate welfare. Some things don't change very much.

## Cardwell foreshore



These old trees survived the worst of cyclone Yasi - but will they survive Main Roads?

Despite early reassurances by the Department of Main Roads, it now seems that the Bruce Highway is to be rebuilt in such a way that the damaged and partly revegetated foreshore, intertidal zone and beach will be replaced by the larger footprint of a new two-lane highway and a curved seawall.

## Landscape

The ridge tops from Ingham to Bingil Bay still look spikey, instead of being softly contoured by generous tree tops. It will never look the same within our lifetimes, due to the physical changes to tree shapes (loss of limbs, trunks snapped), opportunistic post-cyclone clearing and weed invasion. Large stands of mangroves in the Hinchinbrook Channel retained most of their leaves but these went black soon after the cyclone. This black appearance remains today, its long term significance unclear.

## Wildlife

Local reports from the Cassowary Coast suggest continued changes in the patterns of bird and animal movements. Many dugongs and turtles died in the aftermath, ostensibly from starvation as a result of widespread loss and pollution of seagrass.

Yasi accentuated the major problem affecting Mahogany Gliders and cassowaries - habitat fragmentation. See below for a transcript of a recent ABC interview with mahogany glider advocate Daryl Dickson.

Cassowary adults brought their chicks safely through Yasi only for many to be killed by cars and dogs. Cassowary foraging paths and food supply were both disrupted. An artificial feeding program was implemented amidst some controversy and is continuing.

The Torres Strait pigeon counts have shown dramatically lower numbers than before the cyclone. It is not yet clear exactly what the lowered counts mean.

Even in Townsville, long-resident sea birds disappeared from the Breakwater Marina. Only in April did Brahminy kites, striated herons and darters return to expel the invading feral mynah birds from marina piers and boats.#

# THE NEW STATE COASTAL PLAN: CONSULTATION 2010-2011 BETRAYAL 2012

## Consultation 2010-11

In June 2010, the small deputation of Queensland peak group representatives faced DERM in Brisbane, united in opposition to central features of the draft QCP.

DERM agreed to make some important changes. The concept of Maritime Development Area (MDA) (which allows dredging, reclamation, and rock walls) remained, but the extent of each MDA was shrunk to the immediate area of each maritime development; and some were removed - from aquaculture farms, boat ramps, jetties and "greenfield" sites.

Further, we were told "The new Queensland Coastal Plan ... will also incorporate recognition of marine areas with high ecological significance by mirroring values identified in existing Marine Park plans" (Queensland Coastal Plan 1 Building resilient ecosystems p45).

The Coastal Act was amended in late 2011, abolishing the requirement for the Regional Coastal Management Plans which had done so much to protect the GBRWHA coast from Wujal Wujal to Forrest Beach (near Townsville).

## Betrayal 2012

The new Coastal Plan was brought into effect at the last minute before the state elections. It has turned out to be a betrayal of the coast and its wildlife.

1. The new methodologies for MDA (Maritime Development Areas) and ADA (Aquaculture Development Areas) lower the level of environmental protection. Hinchinbrook Channel now seems to be open to marina-type development as well as to aquaculture and mariculture.
2. The new Plan allows for the proliferation of MDAs and for maritime development outside MDAs.
3. The Coastal Plan was implemented without the promised "green" areas of High or Marine Ecological Significance (HES or MES). Yes, that means NO protected area protection in coastal waters.
4. The "no adverse impact" test for development approval all along the coast north to Wujal Wujal and south to Forrest Beach, has been abolished along with the Regional Coastal Management Plans. These had effectively prohibited maritime development by the stringent test "no adverse impact" on *Areas of State Significance (Natural Resources).*
5. All the local area development prohibitions (associated with Key Coastal Sites and Coastal Localities) were lost as well.

The largest of the ASS (NR) were Significant Coastal Wetlands, mapped in dark blue over the designated coastal wetlands along the coast. Additional areas protected included all of Hinchinbrook Channel, all of Missionary Bay, the sea to the east and south of Hinchinbrook Island (Dugong Protection Area); the Brook Group of Islands; Boat Bay; all of Trinity Inlet (Cairns) - among other special places.

All of the above are now rated 3 or lower in the new Methodology (see below) and are open to Maritime Development, except for parts designated Fish Habitat Area type A.

## New state government 2012 - ?

The new (LNP) government has already stated its intention to review the new Coastal Plan, presumably because of strong developer objection to the inclusion of development limits related to sea level rise and hazard zones where no residential development is permitted - unless of course you get approval for a marina, in which case you can have residential "ancillary development", even if you don't actually complete the marina.

This type of development - ancillary development associated with application for a marina - has been promoted as the "new clever development" (See excerpts below from an article in MultiHull World Mar-April 2008).

This article refers to Airlie Beach, where Muddy Bay was destroyed for a marina. The associated units were built and sold, and a few pontoons went in. The company was wound up without actually having built a marina.

At the same time as the draft Coastal Plan was being developed (2009), Boat Bay was identified as a "catalyst project" targeted for "priority funding" in the Tourism Opportunities Plan (TOP). A huge Maritime Development Area (MDA) was subsequently mapped over Boat Bay. Although this proposed MDA was deleted from the final Queensland Coastal Plan, this battle is still to come.

***A planning study for the entire Cassowary Coast is now underway to decide on one or more sites for marina (and "ancillary development") construction.***

DEEDI (Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation) has recently written to ASH explaining the steps of the planning process for the Cassowary Coast (see below).

Developers have long been lobbying for marinas and ancillary development in Boat Bay (Bingil Bay, north of Clump Point) and dredging of the Johnstone River. Mourilyan Harbour (already a port) may be another target. The interest for developers is not necessarily the marina itself but the associated real estate subdivision possibilities.

After ASH representations to DERM (27th June 2011) we were assured the Hinchinbrook Channel would be spared. That assurance no longer has currency, given the government's MDA methodology (discovered by accident last year) and the new government's stated intention to review the Coastal Plan. #

# Queensland Coastal Plan:

# MARITIME DEVELOPMENT AREAS

## A planning methodology for designating maritime development areas Oct 2011

**This methodology document (summary below) was not obtained from DERM**.

*A scanned version of this document was discovered by chance and forwarded to ASH.*

*It differs substantially from the draft conservationists reviewed during the 2010-2011 consultations.*

**Section 1: Background: The coastal plan identifies three categories of maritime development.**

- major ports
- mid-to-large scale maritime development areas (such as mixed use commercial or industrial marinas)
- small scale recreational or service infrastructure (such as boat ramps and jetties)

**section 2: The objective of this planning methodology is to achieve the following:**

- ensure MDAs are located to maximise benefits and minimise costs to the study area from a financial, s
- ocial and environmental perspective.
- ensure consistent and transparent assessment framework to determine and prioritise suitable locations for designation as MDAs.
- specify the type and scale of maritime infrastructure suitable at identified sites.

**section 3: who is involved?** (lists government departments)

**section 4: stepwise approach (summarised)**

1. Peak industry groups will be asked ...
2. Industry representatives and users of maritime infrastructure ... will be consulted ...
3. An assessment of relative environmental constraints ... see Section 5 ...
4. consultation on outputs from steps 3 and 4 with NGOs, leading to refinement or adjustment of investigation areas if necessary ... evaluation using section 7 ... ranking of sites ... ... a general specification of the type and scale of maritime development considered suitable at ranked areas ... consultation with NGOS ... final report.
5. ... recommendations to Minister ... amendments to Coastal Plan.
6. Site-based analysis
7. Preliminary development concepts
8. Designation of site as MDA

**section 5 - explanation and classification of relative environmental constraints.**

Conservation constraints are given a value between 1 and 4:

1. Minimally Constrained Area (coded green)
2. Moderately Constrained Area (coded yellow)
3. Highly Constrained Area (coded orange)
4. Restricted Area (coded red) - affected by a statutory prohibition.

**There follows a table which sets out the various pieces of applicable legislation graded 1-4 as indicated above.**

The only areas graded 4 (prohibition) comprise national and conservation parks declared under the *Nature Conservation Act* , forest and resource reserves, Fish Habitat Areas type A, Koala habitat (part), marine national parks, scientific and buffer zones; and marine parks zones A and B declared under the *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act*.

Dugong/turtle go-slow areas and marine parks declared under the *Marine Parks Act 2004 (Qld)*, Dugong Protection Areas and seagrass areas (to be updated), are graded 3.

**section 6: development of site criteria (and a table).**

**section 7: site analysis (related to a table, section 6).**

**section 8: type and scale of maritime development.** #

## *What happens to migratory birds in cyclones?*

*From AFLOAT magazine, March 2011:*

"An interesting tale to emerge from TC Justin (March 1997) that made landfall near Cairns concerned Eastern Curlews which migrate from Queensland to China each year.

The Queensland Wader Study Group fitted satellite transmitters to I2 of the birds. The birds left Moreton Bay as cyclone Justin was brewing in the Coral Sea. Some of the birds turned up exhausted in New Guinea a couple of days later.

One bird appeared to be trapped in the eye of the cyclone and flew around in the eye for five days before transmissions ceased. It is believed the bird perished. From the total 12 birds only two made it to China. The others turned back.

It is believed that the weather conditions from Justin weakened the birds and the birds realised that surviving a flight to China in their weakened state was unlikely, returning to Moreton Bay."

# Queensland Coastal Plan: AQUACULTURE DEVELOPMENT AREAS

## The Queensland Government has identified aquaculture as a priority industry for the State:

"seeking to ensure an appropriate balance between the needs of the aquaculture industry, existing users of the resource, and the environment".

This new Queensland policy statement (see excerpts below) is a methodology for designating statutory Aquaculture Development Areas analogous to MDAs. The policy statement was published for public review in late 2011 with only a few weeks for responses. It had not been provided in the draft Queensland Coastal Plan 2009 nor during the ongoing consultations in 2010-2011.

The policy relies on a misleading central definition. All aquaculture is (of course) intensive, being the forcing together of thousands and millions of organisms in ponds or cages or on ropes or racks. High intensity is intrinsic to the purpose of convenient high-yield harvesting.

Nevertheless, the Queensland government has defined aquaculture and mariculture as "non-intensive" as long as no feed is added to the system.

Further, Policy Principle PP1 (see below *"... assessment and operational standards will be based on scientific information and the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development"*) is clearly at odds with PP6 and PP8. PP6 rests ultimately on offsets instead of protecting natural ecosystems; and PP8 asks us to "recognise" that aquaculture is environmentally benign.

Is it worth asking how the government proposes to offset seagrass? mangroves?

## Queensland Aquaculture Policy Statement October 2011 (in part)

**The overall vision of this policy statement is the development of ecologically sustainable aquaculture in Queensland that will foster investment, industry development and job creation while managing the state's natural environment.**

The policy will help achieve the following objectives:

1. Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI) priorities that:

- create new private sector jobs
- increase innovation in business
- get the fundamentals right for business
- transform how we work with our clients.
- *Queensland Fisheries Strategy 2009-14* goals that seek to maximise the economic potential of Queensland's primary industries on a sustainable basis.

2. Best practice framework of regulatory arrangements for aquaculture in Australia (Primary Industries Ministerial Council 2005) can be accessed on the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry website at www.daff.gov.au

**To achieve the vision for aquaculture in Queensland the following eight policy principles have been adopted by the Queensland Government:**

**PP1** Aquaculture development assessment and operational standards will be based on scientific information and the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development.

**PP2** Areas suitable for aquaculture development should be designated and formally recognised across government as Aquaculture Development Areas (ADA).

**PP3** Adopt a 'continuous improvement' model for aquaculture development based on a partnership approach between industry, government and research institutions.

**PP4** Apply a risk-based approach to aquaculture development assessment and ensure statutory conditions of operation are commensurate with the level of risk posed by the development.

**PP5** Effectively address emerging issues relating to the planning, development and management of aquaculture in Queensland through coordination between relevant agencies.

**PP6** Adopt the hierarchy of 'avoid–mitigate–offset' to address environmental impacts associated with aquaculture development in designated ADA.

**Avoid** – Where possible impacts will be avoided in areas which are considered of 'high ecological significance' through a planning approach—recognising that such planning needs to be flexible in the face of changing circumstances, knowledge and technologies.

**Mitigate** – Impacts will be mitigated through stringent environmental conditions on aquaculture development approvals.

**Offset** – Where avoidance and mitigation are insufficient to reduce unacceptable environmental impacts, offsets are a flexible, market-based method of conserving environmental quality while permitting the highest value economic use of the resources concerned.

**PP7** Provide greater certainty for the aquaculture industry by ensuring there is a consistent approach in the interpretation and application of relevant legislation and policy through clear whole-of-government guidelines.

PP8 Recognise marine non-intensive aquaculture as having a low environmental impact which may be compatible with general use, habitat protection and conservation park zones. #

# *Newsclips: "Port Hinchinbrook" 1994 and "Port of Airlie" 2008*

## Locals 'misled' over boat ramp: Williams

CARDWELL residents were being deliberately misled into thinking they would have to pay for the upkeep of a proposed access channel to the marina and the public boat ramp; Port Hinchinbrook developer Keith Williams said this week.

"It was an absolute deliberate lie," he said. "Under no circumstances would the people of Cardwell be responsible for any costs associated with the access channel.

"I am prepared to pick up the total cost of maintenance to the marina and the public boat ramp."

Mr Williams said he had been "forced" (by the government) to construct the channel under the Canals Act and not under the Harbours Act as he had planned.

"I wanted to use the Harbours Act under which responsibilty for maintenance would be mine. But I was forced into it because the government in its wisdom wanted to ensure that the public boat ramp always would be under government control.

"But the minute that was hinted, I let it be known that I would be responsible for all costs associated with the access channel.

"I do not want the people of Cardwell to pay for access from the channel to the boat ramp, and the Cardwell Shire Council has had in its hands letters of confirmation of this," Mr Williams said.

Mr Williams said he was also concerned by reports which questioned his ability to finance the project.

"The government has full access to all my financial information but that information is confidential to the government.

"I believe the government has acted responsibly in seeking full details of my assets and liabilities," he said.

*- from the Herbert River Express 14 June 1994*

## Marina berths profitable investment

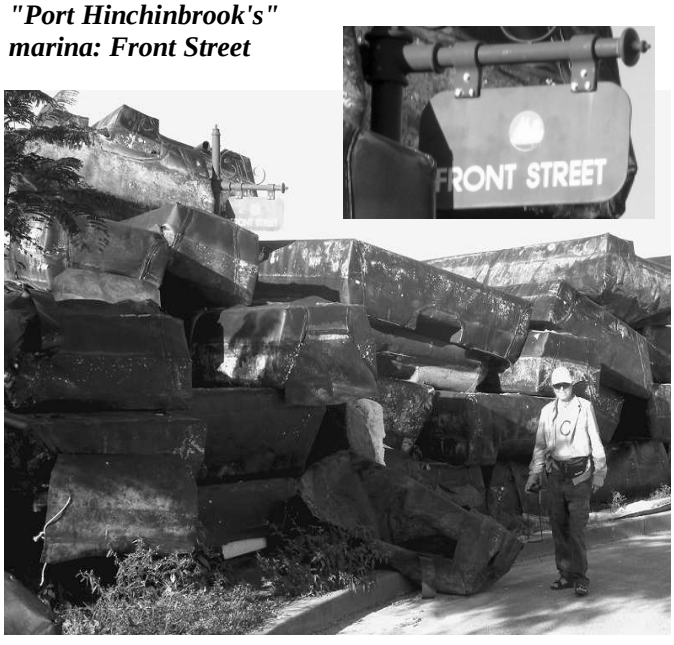
Property analysts Colliers International have been keeping an eye on the rising prices and the company's Brisbane Research Analyst Alison Timchur says marina berths have become the new clever investment.

"We have also targeted areas further along the coastline, recently starting construction on the Port of Airlie project which has a marina component. In the past 12 months we have

*The above is from an article in MultiHull World April-May 2008. The company built the units but was wound up before completing the marina.*

***Below: "Port Hinchinbrook" marina's lonely piles.***

***"Port Hinchinbrook's" marina: Front Street***




## "Port Hinchinbrook" marina August 2011

*... looking somewhat less than profitable ...*

An ASH member, Virginia Ilyff, visits Front Street, "Port Hinchinbrook". These piled-up pontoons had been lifted off the too-short piles by Yasi's sea surge and have been stored on Front Street, near the marina.

The marina has not been rebuilt and is unlikely to be refurbished unless new finance is found.

So far, neither state nor local government (taxpayers and rate payers) has shown any interest in financing the wholly private part of the marina and canal estate.

Nevertheless, the State government has paid for dredging the access canal, despite the assurances and legal agreements between developer and government to that effect (see HRE article top left).

*photos: Margaret Moorhouse*

## Tourism study casts doubt on Hinchinbrook

### Professor Ralf Buckley 1996

In 1996 Professor Ralf Buckley (Engineering and Applied Sciences, Griffiths University) publicised a study which referred to failed tourist developments:

*"… many examples of tourist developments where demand forecasts were wildly over optimistic."*

*"… big-name tourist development companies had run into financial difficulties and needed special government intervention. Eg Sanctuary Cove, Iwasaki Sangyo (Yeppoon) or the Magnetic Quays development near Townsville."*

followed by some prophetic statements about the "Port Hinchinbrook" proposal:

*"This project is real catch 22 for the environment because it is a major development sandwiched between two world heritage areas."*

*"If it is a big success, there will be lots of secondary impacts on the world heritage areas"*

*"If it is a failure, there'll be impacts from an unstable construction site, needing public money to fix it up."*

*"… consideration of environmental and economic costs and benefits should be based on open, publicly available data, through a full public environmental impact assessment."*

*"It is astonishing, if not a national disgrace, that such a major development should receive approval without public environmental impact assessment."*

Despite the apparent care in modern planning (see opposite, letter from the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation or DEEDI) there is still little to prevent developers gambling the environmental values of the world heritage coast in speculative land development.

The new way of planning by spatial mapping of development zones actually lowers the bar when it comes to "environmental constraints": the community will have fewer legal grounds on which to argue caution. #

## News from DEEDI 2012

### re study of demand for Cassowary Coast marine infrastructure

Dear Ms Moorhouse

I am writing to inform you of a study being conducted by the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation on current and future demand for marine infrastructure within the cassowary coast Regional council area.

The study is intended to determine the level of existing and future demand for wet and dry berths and associated marine infrastructure within the Cassowary Coast region. Historical growth in boat ownership levels, incomes and population will be considered to determine likely future boating needs. Both recreational and commercial boating needs will be considered.

The study will not identify future potential development sites for marine infrastructure. However, the report from the study will be provided to the Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) to inform maritime infrastructure planning.

A site identification process is proposed to be undertaken in future by the DERM as part of the public maritime infrastructure planning study identified in the Queensland Coastal plan. The study will examine the nature and scale of maritime infrastructure needs along the Cassowary Coast and assess potential sites from a social, environmental and economic perspective.

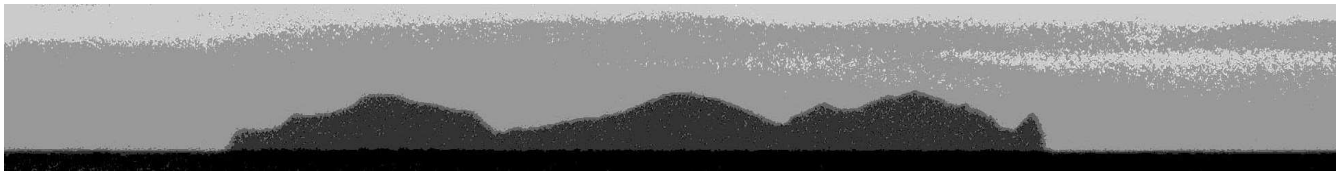
Three workshops intended to gather information to inform the demand analysis will be held. There will be no general public consultation during the project. The final report will be made available to interested parties on the DEEDI website.

Should you have any general queries in relation to this project, please contact Ms Jacquie Edwards on either telephone **3405 5216** or via email **jacquie.edwards@deedi.qld.gov.au**.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Broadbent, Manager, Project Facilitation, Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI)

(undated, received 17 April 2012) #



# CASSOWARY AWARD WINNERS - ASH MEMBERS HONOURED

Pictured are four ASH members who have been honoured by the Board of the Wet Tropics Management Authority with a Cassowary Award in recognition of significant service to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

Margaret Thorsborne AO was one of the very first to receive this award (category Community Conservation, 1999); Suzanne Smith received hers (Neighbour and Landholder) in 2010; and in 2011 it was awarded to photographer Steven Nowakowski (Arts) and also to Margaret Moorhouse (Unsung Hero).

At least one other ASH member has been honoured with a Cassowary Award: John Winter (2002, Landholder).

*photo: Suzie Smith's camera.*

# ASH FLIGHT October 2011: "PORT HINCHINBROOK'S" SILT TRAP

Two views of the silted-up entrance to "Port Hinchinbrook", photo taken close to low tide, showing the extensive sediment build up south of the southern breakwall.

Mangroves are colonising the highest parts of the new bank.

Building the breakwalls was probably less costly than dredging this material out of the Grande Canal and the marina basin.

*photo: Margaret Moorhouse*

This view (left) shows the silted marina basin and Grande Canal, both almost empty of pontoons. A few boats are still moored there.

The most seaward fringing mangroves have retained most of their Yasi-affected leaves. Many still have a blackened appearance.

The future of the extensive areas of the blackened Channel mangroves is not known.

ASH has been advised that many years will pass before seagrass is prolific in the Hinchinbrook region.

*photo: Margaret Moorhouse*

# "PORT HINCHINBROOK'S" TOXIC LEGACY

This charming view looks north across "Port Hinchinbrook" to Cardwell in the far distance (top left).

Coming south from Cardwell one can see the mud flats off the Oyster Point foreshore, the "Port Hinchinbrook" marina and canal estate, the "Grande Canal" access to the public boat ramp, and the ship maintenance basin which was used as the official discharge point for sulphuric acid drainage from the dredge spoil ponds.

Next south is Lot 170, 60 ha of agricultural land, used for over 20 years for the disposal of acid sulphate soils and marine dredge spoil.

Adjacent to Lot 170 is Girrimay National Park, much damaged by unofficial discharges from the "Port Hinchinbrook" dredge spoil ponds and the officially sanctioned barrier (the original above-ground spoil pond) blocking all overland fresh water flows.

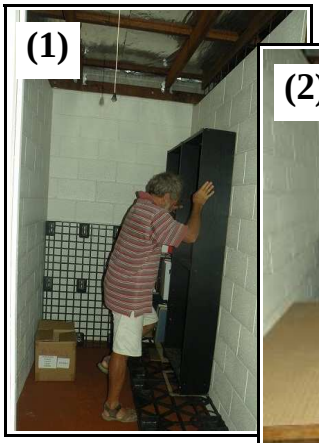
The blackening of the fringing mangroves south of Oyster Point is due to Cyclone Yasi.

South of Lot 170 is more agricultural land (the northern edge of the first block visibly damaged by leakage from Lot 170).

*photo: Margaret Moorhouse; ASH flight*

## ASH STORAGE

*photos: Margaret Moorhouse*



**September 2010**: Storage Room at Tully St. South Townsville **(1)** Mal McLean places old chipboard bookshelves on plastic pallets in anticipation of flooding; and **(2)** steel-framed table and many boxes of files arrive.

**(3) February 2011**: "cyclone-proof" temporary storage (upstairs, unlit), Woolcock Street Townsville, just prior to cyclones Anthony and Yasi;

**(4) September 2011**: North Queensland Conservation Council has kindly allowed use of their new premises - ASH bookcases, files and boxes of photos being installed.

ASH files are being returned, after being scanned, to the Tully Street storage room, now dry though flood soiled. The chipboard bookshelves survived partial storm immersion due to their placement on plastic pallets. Some posters however were lost.

**Newsletter compiled and edited by Margaret Moorhouse, c/- ASH**