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Your reference  
Our reference CNS7395

Environmental Protection Agency

Incorporating the  
Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service

8 August 2008

Andrew Cripps MP  
Member for Hinchinbrook  
Electorate Office  
PO Box 1515  
INGHAM QLD 4850

Dear Mr Cripps

### Erosion Concerns Wongaling Beach

Thank you for your letter of 14 July 2008 making representation on behalf of The Mission Beach Community Association concerning the erosion occurring along the beachfront adjacent to Reid Road, Wongaling Beach, and what can be seen as associated safety issues relating to public access to these areas.

The maintenance of esplanades adjoining foreshore is under the jurisdiction of the relevant Council, and your concerns have been raised with Mr Paul Devine of the Cassowary Coast Regional Council about possible solutions and permitting requirements.

The *State Coastal Management Plan* and the *Cardwell Hinchinbrook Regional Coastal Management Plan* require proposals for coastal protection works to be assessed against a number of policies, including 2.2.2 *Erosion prone areas* and 2.2.3 *Shoreline erosion management*. For example, policy 2.2.2 requires a range of defined options to be considered for the management of shoreline erosion.

The protection of development from sea erosion is most effectively achieved by the provision and maintenance of an adequately sized and development free buffer zone. A buffer zone allows episodes of erosion and accretion to be accommodated naturally with no threat to development, and provides a reservoir of sand to nourish the beach during erosion events.

These buffer zones are often in the form of esplanades, undeveloped road reserves or reserves and unallocated state land. The area of this erosion concern adjacent to Reid Road has an existing esplanade buffer width of approximately 30 metres with no immediate threat to infrastructure. EPA coastal engineers have advised that this area is in a stage of slow rate long term recession, which is a natural character of this section of the coast.

However, as mentioned previously Council have jurisdiction to maintain esplanades which extends to areas adjoining, that require works to ensure safe public access. Those minor maintenance works on state coastal land (not requiring permitting) include dune scarp slope reduction for public safety, which is for short term community benefit and Council has been advised accordingly.

Council has advised that part of the erosion is at a public access point to the foreshore, and is caused by a stormwater discharge to the beach, and advises it is in the process of being remedied as part of Councils works budget consideration for the 2008-2009 financial year.

Further to a temporary resolution to the erosion concerns, the selection of the most appropriate wholistic method for dealing with coastal erosion involves investigating the causes of the erosion and the identification of a scheme of works within environmental, economic and social constraints.

Artificial nourishment of an eroding beach is less likely to have negative impacts on nearby areas. However maintenance of an artificial beach may require regular and expensive replenishment of sand.

An optimal means of addressing "erosion hot spots" is through the preparation of a Shoreline Erosion Management Plan, which would cover all proposed works in the Cassowary Coast Regional Council local government area. Benefits to Council with this approach are:

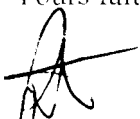
- Funding support – as Council would appreciate the State government offers a 25% subsidy for beach nourishment works that are of a capital nature. A planned strategy for managing shoreline erosion is likely to secure funding whereas maintenance works such as sand pushing will not;
- Longer-term surety for Council to conduct necessary shoreline erosion works – a comprehensive plan would negate the need for a short-term development permit (approval to conduct works over a 5-year period is envisaged);
- Simpler process for future applications – it is anticipated that the plan would only require minor revisions to support a new application when the development permit expires; and
- Public support – an important aspect of the plan would be public consultation, since it is important that the community has an understanding of why the shoreline erosion works are required and how the works are part of a planned strategy for management of the coastline.

Priority areas identified in the *Cardwell Hinchinbrook Regional Coastal Management Plan* for management of shoreline erosion (policy 2.2.3) in the Cassowary Coast Regional Council local government area include South Mission Beach immediately adjoining Wongaling Beach and could include Wongaling Beach if it is determined there is need to prioritize the implementation of a Shoreline Erosion Management Plan.

Currently a Shoreline Erosion Management Plan (SEMP) is being prepared by Cassowary Coast Regional Council for other priority areas recognised in the Shire, with consultation and advice offered by EPA's Coastal Engineers. Your concerns regarding this particular area, and what could be a perceived need for the preparation of a SEMP has also been referred to Council.

Mr Peter Stock of this Agency can be contacted in the first instance, on telephone 4046 6723 for clarification of any of the above and further assistance in regard to this matter.

Yours faithfully



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