



# QLD WADER STUDY GROUP

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## QUEENSLAND WADER STUDY GROUP (QWSG)

A Special Interest Group of the Queensland Ornithological Society Inc.

### POSITION STATEMENT ON THE RAMSAR CONVENTION AND A PROPOSAL TO BUILD A RESIDENTIAL AND RETAIL DEVELOPMENT OVER INTERTIDAL MUDFLATS AT TOONDAH HARBOUR, MORETON BAY, QUEENSLAND.

**Dated: 22 July, 2021**

The QWSG calls on the Australian Federal Government, the Queensland State Government and the Redland City Council to respect obligations to protect internationally-recognised wetlands at Toondah Harbour in Moreton Bay under the Ramsar Convention.

Australia became a signatory to the Ramsar Convention fifty years ago in 1971. The proposal to develop a residential and retail complex over intertidal mudflats to the north of the existing Stradbroke Island Ferry terminal will, if it proceeds, extinguish part of the Moreton Bay Ramsar site. Should it proceed, its lengthy construction period will disturb a wider area of Moreton Bay marine environment.

QWSG recognises that the existing ferry terminal needs renewal to support the economic and social advancement of North Stradbroke Island and supports appropriate and environmentally sound development of the ferry terminal and its links to the island. QWSG does not support the current proposed development that extends well beyond the terminal site to extinguish approximately 44 hectares of marine coastal habitat.

Australia became a signatory to the Ramsar Convention in 1971 and has remained a supporter of international obligations under the Convention with more than seventy Australian wetlands registered by Australia under the Convention. QWSG notes that in recent years two development applications submitted to the Commonwealth under the EPBC Act (1999) that would have impacted upon Australian coastal Ramsar sites have been declined by the Federal Minister for the Environment – the first at Turtle Cove on the Queensland Fraser Coast and the second adjacent to the Ramsar site at Eighty-mile Beach in Western Australia. QWSG welcomes the decisions of the Minister for the Environment to protect the coastal habitats for migratory shorebirds in these internationally-recognised important areas.

Moreton Bay became a Ramsar site in 1993, one year after the Bay was gazetted a marine park in Queensland. Surveys of shorebirds conducted by QWSG formed a part of the information that led to the gazetting of the Moreton Bay Marine Park in 1992 and subsequently to the declaration of parts of the marine park as a Ramsar site the following year. Since that time QWSG has worked with all levels of government, the private sector and community organisations to improve the conservation of Moreton Bay as one of Australia's most significant migratory shorebird habitats. QWSG is recognized both nationally and internationally for its practical on-the-ground work and for its advisory role with governments, the private sector and non-government sector. QWSG has provided advice and submissions to the Commonwealth Government on the proposed Toondah Harbour development. It has also made available to the developer's consultant appropriate data on shorebirds in Moreton Bay.

- In the interests of public accountability and citizen engagement, QWSG calls on the Queensland State Government and the Redland City Council to be transparent in their arrangements with the developer about the Toondah harbour proposal. QWSG notes that some aspects of the arrangements between the developer and government remain 'commercial-in-confidence'.
- The QWSG calls on the Queensland State Government to withdraw the declaration of a Priority Development Area for the wetlands to the immediate north of the Toondah Ferry terminal and reaffirm its commitment to the protection of the Moreton Bay Ramsar site.
- The QWSG calls in the Federal Minister of the Environment to safeguard the Moreton Bay Ramsar site by upholding the obligations under the Ramsar Convention and declining the application for the development of a residential and retail development over the wetlands at Toondah Harbour.

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