



Media release

Minister for State Development, Manufacturing,
Infrastructure and Planning
The Honourable Cameron Dick

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Big ships cruise towards Cairns

A \$120 million upgrade to the Port of Cairns is closer thanks to the finalisation of the state's consideration of the Environmental Impact Statement for the project.

Minister for State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning Cameron Dick today announced the state's independent Coordinator-General has approved the port upgrades with very stringent reef safeguards.

"The Ports North project will be a game-changer for the Far North Queensland tourism industry by allowing a significant increase in the size and number of cruise ships and other vessels that can berth in Cairns," Mr Dick said.

"Economic modelling suggests the project will deliver an \$850 million boost to Far North Queensland tourism.

"The region will see the greatest benefit from passenger expenditure, port charges and associated supplies and servicing activity as the Cairns Shipping Development Project will allow for over 100 additional cruise ships to berth annually in the Port of Cairns by 2031.

"This will potentially result in a tripling of the number of passenger days spent in Cairns each year due to cruise ship tourism, being an increase of 225,000 passenger days each year by 2031.

"More significantly, the upgrade will enable mega class cruise ships up to 300m in length to berth at the port."

Mr Dick said that, by 2031, a total of 183 cruise ships are predicted to visit Cairns with the help of the new channel, creating 2730 direct and indirect full-time equivalent ongoing jobs in the region.

"The project will also create more than 195 direct full-time equivalent jobs on average during construction, including professional services and engineering jobs to upgrade wharves at the Port of Cairns, widen and deepen the existing Trinity Inlet shipping channel and install new navigational aids," he said.

"Major new opportunities will open up for local suppliers to meet the cruise ship operators' needs for goods and services."

Mr Dick said deeper channel access to the HMAS Cairns Navy base will also enhance the potential for the Royal Australian Navy's larger ships and US naval carriers to berth in Cairns, enabling future expansion of defence activities in the region.

Increased channel depth and width will also improve the efficiency and safety of existing and future shipping operations.

Mr Dick said the Reef will be protected by a comprehensive set of conditions that Ports North must meet.

"The Coordinator-General has worked closely with Ports North and the Cairns Regional Council and listened to the local community through several rounds of public consultation to ensure the project responded to the State Government's *Sustainable Ports Development Act 2015* and the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan," he said.

"In his evaluation report, the Coordinator-General evaluated all the possible environmental impacts and sets comprehensive conditions to manage potential impacts on Trinity Inlet within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and state marine park.

"They include managing marine water quality, plant clearing and activity in the state marine park.

The Minister said the next step would be for the Commonwealth to support the project under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Minister for Transport and Main Roads Mark Bailey, added "the previous scope of the project under LNP - involving 4.4 million cubic metres of dredge spoil and costing up to \$440 million - just didn't stack up, environmentally or economically."

Speaker of the Queensland Parliament and Member for Mulgrave, Curtis Pitt MP, welcomed the finalisation of the state's consideration of the Environmental Impact Statement.

"The volume of dredging has been reduced by 77 per cent, from 4.4 million cubic metres to 1 million cubic metres, and all capital dredge material will be placed on land, not dumped at sea as once proposed by the previous Government," he said.

"The reduced dredging volume has environmental benefits, will result in faster completion timeframes and will mean the benefits to Cairns are delivered sooner."

Member for Cairns Michael Healy said approval of the Cairns Port upgrade is an extremely positive result for the region.

"This project is a positive step for the Far North, providing a benefit not just for the tourism industry, but providing further opportunities for our marine services industry," he said.

"Moving towards approval of this development is great news not only for Cairns, but for the whole Far North and for Queensland."

Member for Barron River and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services, the Hon. Craig Crawford MP, said the Cairns Shipping Development Project would transform the Far North's cruise shipping sector.

"Cairns is one of the few docks in the country where you can dock a cruise ship right in the city, and we want to capitalise on that," he said.

"The future of the cruise shipping industry in Australia is extremely bright, and this development would really unleash the potential for our region to truly make the most of that industry growth."

Ports North Chairman, Russell Beer said he was proud of Ports North's achievement in bringing this region-shaping opportunity a significant step closer to becoming a reality.

"Receiving environmental approval from the Coordinator-General confirms we now have a workable solution for expansion of the Port of Cairns," he said.

"The positive impact this significant development will have on the Cairns economy cannot be understated – from creating jobs through to boosting local business, multiple sectors and thousands of locals will reap the benefits of a transformed Cairns Port," Mr Dick said.

FAST FACTS

290 conditions have been set by the Coordinator-General, including that Ports North:

- has an approved dredge management plan to mitigate all impacts from dredging
- establishes a Technical Advisory Group to oversee the dredging
- protects the water quality in the Barron River
- manages flooding at the Northern Sands dredge disposal area

Subject to Commonwealth environmental approvals, Ports North plan to start work in 2019 and have the first larger cruise ship entering the upgraded channel in late 2019.

Dredging will occur over a 12 week period.

For more information visit www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/assessments-and-approvals/cairns-shipping-development-project.html

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