

Dredge arrives to cut path to Cairns prosperity



Cairns' \$127 million Shipping Development is one step closer to unlocking a tourism bonanza for the region with a dredging program to remove material from the Trinity Inlet over the next 12 weeks.

Member for Cairns Michael Healy said the 111m-long, German-built dredging ship Balder R would be tasked to open up the inlet for large cruise ships after a successful stint at dredging sand for the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games.

"The Cairns Shipping Development is the key to unlocking a whole new tourism and jobs market for the Far North," Mr Healy said.

"Already we're seeing this project create 800 direct and indirect jobs during construction, and by 2031 it'll mean more than 2,700 jobs for the region.

The vessel is expected to remove soft clays from the channel, which will then be delivered to a facility 3km offshore and pumped along an 8km pipeline to a dedicated site at the Northern Sands mine.

“Not only will there be a significant increase in the size and number of cruise ships and other vessels that can berth in Cairns, the shipping channel and other port upgrades open up opportunities for the naval presence in Far North Queensland as well.

“What this means on the ground is more visitors to Cairns, more demand for tourism experiences in this beautiful region and more jobs across a range of businesses.”

Dredging is expected to take 12 weeks and be complete mid-September, with second dredge Woomera scheduled to join the works in late July. The 65m Woomera will be used to remove the stiff clays from the channel.

Transport and Main Roads Minister Mark Bailey said the Cairns Shipping Development would mean for the very first time, cruise ships up to 300m in length would be able to enter the Cairns Port, bringing with them thousands of tourists ready to spend their money on local businesses and experiences.

“With dredging well underway, we’ll see wharves one to six also get an upgrade in coming months,” Mr Bailey said.

“It complements the Palaszczuk Government’s infrastructure program for the Far North in 2019/20 which will deliver more than \$967 million in key projects and support close to 3,300 jobs.”

Ports North Chairman Russell Beer said:

“While the main purpose of the Project is to take advantage of cruise shipping opportunities, it will also enable future expansion of the HMAS Cairns Base by relocating the existing cargo swing basin; improve port efficiency by allowing larger cargo and other vessels through; and increase the resilience of the Port of Cairns against an extreme weather event.

“This latest milestone in the Project is very exciting for us.”

About the Balder R

Balder R is owned by Danish company Rohde Nielsen. It was specially designed to work in shallow water around the world and is considered one of the most versatile vessels of its kind.

Built in Germany in 2011, Balder R is 111.30 metre in length overall, with a breadth of 19.40 metre and has a 6000 cubic metre carrying capacity.

The vessel is highly manoeuvrable and energy efficient and has state-of-the-art environmental systems to ensure the protection of sea flora and fauna.

ENDS