



Queensland Productivity Commission
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Dear Queensland Productivity Commission

Impact of the Australian Government's 2025 Environment Protection Reforms on Queensland

Redlands2030 Inc (Redlands2030) is a community organisation which advocates for improved planning and governance, particularly in matters relating to and affecting Redland City.

We wish to make a brief submission to the inquiry - Impact of the Australian Government's 2025 Environment Protection Reforms on Queensland.

Bilateral Agreements

Redlands2030 prefers that EPBC environmental approval decisions be made by the Federal Government rather than by the Queensland Government under a bilateral agreement.

In our view the Queensland Government does not have an environmental department or agency with sufficient capability and influence to stand up to departments which are focussed on economic development.

Improved environmental protection for koalas

Redlands2030 considers that it would be preferable if the EPBC Act provided increased protection for matters of national environmental significance.

Of particular concern to the Redlands is the rapid decline in the population of koalas which have been listed as Endangered under the EPBC Act since February 2022.

Redlands2030 would prefer to see a firmer and clearer approach to EPBC protection of koala habitat.

Unproductive effort – a brief case study

In 2013 Redland City Council sought State Government Approval for a Priority Development Area (PDA) at Toondah Harbour. The State Government acceded to this request and declared the Toondah Harbour PDA in mid-2013.

Much of the designated PDA overlapped the Moreton Bay Ramsar site although the existing Toondah Harbour ferry terminal facilities were not in the Ramsar site. Redland City Council had been aware since 2006 that the Ramsar site may be a constraint to any development and that any development proposals expanding Toondah Harbour would be subject to Federal Government decision making.

In 2014 Redland City Council and the State Government selected Walker Group Pty Ltd (Walker Group) as preferred developer for the Toondah Harbour PDA.

Walker Group submitted three EPBC referrals between 2015 and 2018 for proposals which involved reclamation of Ramsar wetlands and development of 3,600 apartments next to Toondah Harbour. In 2018 the Federal Government designated Walker Group's third referral as a controlled action with assessment to be done by Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Walker Group published a draft EIS (more than 5,000 pages) in 2022. More than 25,000 submissions were made in response to the draft EIS with 86% not supporting the proposed development.

On 9 April 2024 the Federal Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek announced that she proposed to refuse Walker Group's application for development at Toondah Harbour. A few days later Walker Group withdrew their application saying that they needed "an appropriate amount of time ... to determine whether an alternative scheme would be viable for the project partners" i.e. Redland City Council and the State Government.

The Federal Environment Department's strong advice to its Minister, Tanya Plibersek, on the controversial Toondah Harbour proposal, reveals the Minister had no alternative but to reject the proposed scheme.

In April 2026 Walker Group decided to withdraw from the Toondah Harbour development.

Several million dollars were invested in plans for development at Toondah Harbour by Redland City Council, the Queensland Government and most of all by Walker Group. Significant community effort was applied to opposing both the Priority Development Area and Walker Groups's plans to develop 3600 apartments on Ramsar wetlands.

This 'investment' was totally unproductive. All parties (especially Walker Group) would have been better off financially if Redland City Council had paid attention to expert advice and not instigated plans for coastal development which would have harmful impacts on Ramsar wetlands.

The Toondah Harbour case study points to the need for clearer signals early on as to what types of development will be constrained or prevented under the EPBC Act because of their impacts on matters of national environmental significance.

Redlands2030 would be pleased to provide the Queensland Productivity Commission with further information about the need for improved protection of koala habitat, and about the Toondah Harbour story.

Yours sincerely



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