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Gecko - Gold Coast and Hinterland Environment Council Assn Inc.

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Media Release

LNP Dredge Pledge Lack Credibility.

Mr Campbell Newman's statement that environmental studies are not necessary prior to dredging the Broadwater is extremely alarming. That he came to that conclusion after a short cruise and flight over the Broadwater raises many questions about his credibility to take on big projects without proper planning and consideration of all factors.

Lois Levy, President of Gecko- Gold Coast and Hinterland Environment Council Inc (Gecko) was dismayed when she heard of the LNP statement and said " Mr Newman says it is about " the simple pleasures of boating and fishing" , but he does not seem to realise that having fish to catch is dependent on a healthy marine environment. This means that dredging must avoid sea grass areas which are fish nurseries and other important habitat to significant creatures such as dugong and turtles. This can only be determined by studies."

Gecko calls on both major parties to take the future viability of the Broadwater marine environment seriously and commit only to actions that are informed by proper scientific studies, which protect this unique marine asset for all users, not just the boaties and fishers.

The Broadwater is a natural area which has been modified by human activity to provide homes for wealthy people. It is silted up partly as a result of failure to control upstream development with adequate sedimentation controls as well as development within the Broadwater itself. The recent heavy rains demonstrated the enormous silt loads carried by rivers. It is also home to an amazing array of marine creatures as has been demonstrated by recent film by marine photographer and diver, Ian Banks in a presentation at Southport late in 2011 as part of Coast Care Week. This sheltered marine environment and its inhabitants requires protection of the highest order, not some ad hoc approach which only serves the commercial interests of a few.

Gecko is aware that some careful, minimal dredging of the Broadwater may be necessary for safety of boats and to avoid flood backup issues, however this must be done following proper studies and determine the areas which can be dredged without major environmental damage. Past studies may not be applicable today or tomorrow."

There have been several bodies studying the future of the Broadwater, the last being the Gold Coast Harbour 2020 Vision, which had very broad government, business and community representation. Extensive consultation determined that a proper balance between commercial and environmental interests was essential to the long term viability of the Broadwater.

Lois Levy stated that "The current Government has established the Broadwater Community Reference Group (BCRG) to develop a sustainable Broadwater Master Plan based on scientific studies of the current status of the Broadwater marine and foreshore environment. The BCRG is due to meet for the first time after the election and it is hoped this will be the case in the event of the election of the LNP to government. This body could work in tandem with a new revamped Gold Coast Waterways Authority."

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