



## **PRESS RELEASE / STATEMENT – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **VITAL MARINE MAMMAL HABITAT AND SANCTUARY UNDER THREAT FROM PROPOSED GOLD COAST CASINO RESORT AND CRUISE SHIP TERMINAL**

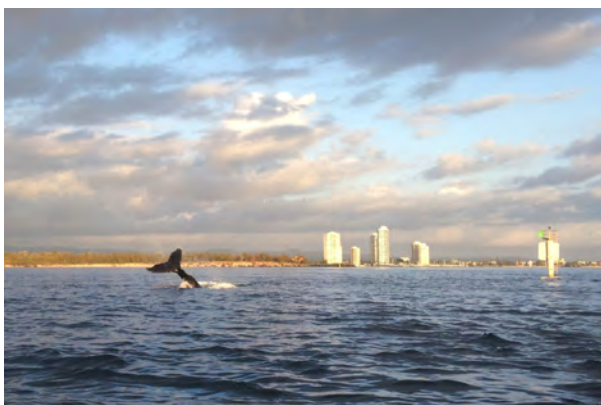
*“This is the Gold Coast’s very own ‘Barrier Reef Marine Park’ and it is equally diverse and sensitive - it could never endure 15 years of massive construction and an infinite large-scale dredging operation.” – Save Our Spit Vice President Luke Sorensen*

**June 12<sup>th</sup> 2014**

Today the Save Our Spit Alliance has reaffirmed their organisation’s unwavering commitment to actively doing all they can, both publicly and behind the scenes, to prevent the large scale environmental devastation that will certainly occur should the proposed cruise ship terminal, resort, casino and residential mega development in the Gold Coast broadwater be allowed to proceed. Save Our Spit are backed by tens of thousands of residents and have said they will fight together against this proposal to the very end and beyond, calling for the area around Wavebreak Island and The Spit to be legislated for inclusion in the Moreton Bay Marine Park reserve, and protected from irresponsible development in perpetuity.

The announcement comes as the federal minister for the environment Greg Hunt tours the Moreton Bay Marine Park today with a leading dugong research and conservation team. Save Our Spit is urging the minister to not overlook the pivotal role the Gold Coast Seaway and Wavebreak Island areas play in the interconnected marine environment he is visiting. Save Our Spit Vice President Luke Sorensen has today highlighted the importance of Wavebreak Island and the Gold Coast broadwater as a critical habitat for marine mammals, as well as hundreds of other species, many of which are threatened or endangered –

**“Much of the area around Wavebreak Island and the Gold Coast Seaway is home to fragile seagrass beds and breeding habitat as well as critical migratory bird end points – it’s one of the**



**A humpback whale plays just in front of Wavebreak Island, late season in 2013 – almost on top of the area that is currently being proposed to become a cruise ship terminal and swing basin that is dredged in perpetuity | Photo: Nate Mills**

**most important habitats for our broad-spectrum sea-life ecologies in the region. We’ve seen slowly increasing numbers of dugong sightings over the last few years, with the threatened marine mammals now being sighted regularly in and around the Gold Coast seaway as well as being observed resting and feeding around Wavebreak Island. Even the humpback whales are increasing in numbers each year with many mothers and calves now relying on the seaway as a vital resting spot on the long journey back to Antarctica. I’ve been diving there for over 20 years and there’s never been so much life, so many special animals, all living in and depending on the area.**

**“Whilst we think it’s great to see Mr Hunt here in the area investigating dugong conservation, it’s an absolute scandal that under the highly questionable plans currently being thrust out by the Gold Coast mayor, the state government and a mysterious Chinese consortium, we would certainly see the entire area almost wiped out by dredging and construction - all of it gone for the sake of a giant foreign owned suburb, casino and hoax cruise ship terminal. We are calling on the federal government and the minister to not sit idle on this, to step in and act on their sovereign responsibility to ensure that the preservation and conservation of our best natural assets is not forsaken for a few private developers and Chinese owned engineering companies to run up a profit. We are calling on Greg Hunt to act now to ensure that common sense prevails in this instance, and that the Gold Coast’s own coastal central park, our public beaches and foreshores, and our marine sanctuary is not obliterated just to assist in elevating the bank balances of Chinese investors and because of a few outdated lines on a map.**

**“The Gold Coast and Southport broadwater have always been home to dugongs, dolphins, turtles and more, and we are just now seeing their numbers increasing. The Seaway and Wavebreak Island now have over a quarter of a century’s worth of recovery and growth behind them; to destroy it all would be irresponsible and negligent. Dugongs and whales are just one small piece of the diversity here though - we have over 450 species of documented marine life here that will all suffer greatly or be lost forever under the irresponsible proposal, along with dozens of migratory and resident birds that rely on the area as a safe and undeveloped roosting location. We’re not talking about a few black swans here, this is the Gold Coast’s very own ‘Barrier Reef Marine Park’ and it is equally diverse and sensitive - it could never endure 15 years of massive construction and an infinite large-scale dredging operation. If this goes ahead and there are mega ships and ongoing dredging, it will very likely permanently convert our turquoise and blue broadwater into a baron and brown dredge-soup.”**



Dugongs are native to the Nerang River and once thrived here. Their numbers are slowly increasing from nearly being wiped out from the area late last century. Seagrass beds as well as other fragile habitats around Wavebreak Island and The Seaway form and critical and important part of their recovery. More and more are being sighted and their recovery should be given all the support we can offer | Photo: Julien Willem

Save Our Spit Alliance is not only calling on Mr Hunt to step in and move the Gold Coast broadwater area up into the top of his list of concerns, and for the federal government to work with the state government to extend the boundary of the Moreton Bay Marine Park to include the southern broadwater to west of Seaworld, the Gold Coast Seaway and the waterways surrounding Wavebreak Island and the Spit. Save Our Spit wants to make it crystal clear that whatever happens in the Gold Coast broadwater will always ripple outward and have a lasting impact on the whole southern Moreton Bay Marine Park, and as such the outdated boundaries should be revised to include the Gold Coast broadwater properly in the Moreton reserve – the areas are one in the same. Mr Sorensen also went on to say -

**“Certainly no other place in Australia, and I doubt many anywhere in the world have such an environmental treasure and spectacular marine park right inside a major city. This area is as rich in economic opportunity from soft and green tourism, as it is in biodiversity and its social and**

ecological value – to not legislate to protect it permanently would be an immeasurably tragic loss for not only the people of the Gold Coast, but for all Australian’s and those that come to our shores. This place is unique and irreplaceable, it is public land that belongs to the people and to preserve and protect it is what the people of the Gold Coast want - this is what our tourism in Queensland is based on, not casino chips and mega shipping lanes designed to benefit a private foreign minority.”

Visit our Facebook page for the latest updates from Save Our Spit – <http://www.facebook.com/saveourspit>

***Should the Moreton Bay Marine Park border be extended to the Seaworld section of The Spit to include Wavebreak Island, The Seaway and the surrounding region?***

(Moreton Bay Marine Park current map - <http://www.docstoc.com/docs/91953798/Moreton-Bay-Marine-Park>)

Let your federal environment minister Greg Hunt know what you think should happen to this area, and how you feel about how much, or how little, is currently being done to preserve and protect the ecology, the marine animals, the waterway and environment in that space.



**[CONTACT MINISTER HUNT HERE](http://www.greghunt.com.au/ContactGreg.aspx)**

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**Humpback whales often call the Seaway their temporary home – it is now clear that it has become a vital resting place for mothers and newborn calves during their long migration back to Antarctica | Photo: GCB**