Ms Vickie Power
32 Coomaroo Crescent
Minyama Qld 4575

Dear Ms Power

Thank you for the recent petition asking for urgent dredging of the Mooloolah River mouth and an assurance that timely maintenance dredging is undertaken on an ongoing basis in the future. This petition was received by the House on 11 September 2003 and forwarded to me for my direct response by the Clerk of the Parliament.

As you would be aware the state government recently completed this dredging work. The natural currents and wave action in this location usually shift sand bars from the entrance channel without the need for human intervention.

However, on this occasion coastal conditions had failed to clear the entrance and it was necessary to use dredging equipment to speed up the process.

Maritime Safety Queensland (MSQ) carries out regular hydrographic surveys of the harbour entrance and in April 2003 became aware of the formation of the sandbar. Since that time, MSQ had regularly moved navigation markers and issued Notices to Mariners advising of the changed conditions. Consistent advice from MSQ over recent months was that the sandbar, although requiring care to navigate, did not present a significant safety risk.

Since 1987, sandbars have formed in the harbour entrance and subsequently disappeared through natural coastal processes over periods between a number of weeks and a few months.

The last time dredging was undertaken, the work was almost complete when heavy sea conditions caused the sandbar to reform in the entrance and it had to be completely redredged. This situation also happened in 1986, when the entrance was dredged twice within a few months, after the sandbar reformed.

This shows that the decision to dredge the harbour entrance cannot be made lightly, as it could result in a waste of hundreds of thousands of dollars if the sandbar quickly reforms, as has happened in the past.

Yours sincerely

- Original signed by Minister -

Steve Bredhauer
Minister for Transport
and Minister for Main Roads
Member for Cook