



Minister for Transport and Main Roads

Our ref: PET 28718

Your ref: A378351

14 NOV 2018

Mr Neil Laurie
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Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to petition numbers 3025-18 and 2974-18 lodged with the Legislative Assembly on 16 October 2018 about the Yorkeys Knob Boat Ramp project.

For many years, Cairns boaties have been calling for more recreational boat-launching facilities to cater for high local demand. Between April and September 2016, the Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) worked closely with a reference group consisting of the Honourable Craig Crawford MP, Member for Barron River, Cairns Regional Council, Cairns Recreational Fishing Industry Stakeholders and local boaties to inspect and assess numerous potential locations for a new boat launching facility between Cairns and Ellis Beach.

In late 2016, the reference group recommended vacant, state-owned land at Yorkeys Knob as the most suitable location to focus further investigations. The site was chosen based on a number of factors, including availability of land, all-tide access and limited environmental impact when compared to other sites.

Since then, TMR has made significant changes to the concept design based on local stakeholder feedback. In mid-2018, TMR hosted a public information display at Yorkeys Knob Shopping Centre, which attracted strong interest from the local community. I am advised that feedback from the community indicates that, although there is some opposition to the project, there is also strong support, and an urgency to progress construction.

The existing two-lane boat ramp at Yorkeys Knob is inadequate to cater for current demand, and feedback from ramp users and residents indicates that this leads to congestion, parking issues and some antisocial behaviour during peak periods. After construction of the new boat ramp, this demand will be spread over more ramps. TMR expects a significant improvement in parking congestion on busy boating days and only a minimal increase in traffic on local roads.

When building new boat ramps, TMR is obliged to provide adequate car and trailer parking facilities to accommodate demand. The total number of parking spaces to be provided as part of this project is yet to be finalised, however, it will be sufficient to accommodate the number of effective lanes at this ramp during periods of normal demand.

TMR is aware of some calls for the facility to be built on the western side of Half Moon Creek at Trinity Park, where there is a derelict, high-tide boat ramp. TMR officers consider there are multiple issues with the suggested site at Trinity Park, and strongly contest claims that using this site would be cheaper and have fewer impacts.

As the land at the suggested Trinity Park site is privately owned, the Queensland Government would need to acquire a significant portion of it before any development could occur. Constructing a facility of the proposed scale at Trinity Park would require extensive capital dredging, removal of foreshore mangroves, revocation of a declared fish habitat area (Class B) and significant engineering of the creek entrance, via rock barriers, to mitigate flooding and coastal process constraints of development in this location.

TMR's assessment is that the Trinity Park site would have a high siltation infill rate, resulting in high, ongoing maintenance dredging costs. In comparison, the proposed site at Yorkeys Knob will require minimal and infrequent maintenance dredging (on previously dredged seabed), no mangrove removal at the ramp site, and can be wholly accommodated on vacant, state-owned land. Therefore, TMR does not consider the suggested site at Trinity Park a viable alternative location for a facility of the scale proposed.

I share the concerns of petitioners about potential environmental impacts and TMR is undertaking detailed modelling and environmental investigations to ensure the design minimises these impacts. TMR will ensure that all planning and construction activities are carried out in accordance with environmental protection legislation and will work closely with relevant environmental agencies throughout delivery. Because the project site at Yorkeys Knob is not in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, it will have a negligible impact on the Great Barrier Reef.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mark Bailey', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

MARK BAILEY MP
Minister for Transport and Main Roads