

Industrialisation of the Great Barrier Reef Denounced by World Heritage Committee



The Australian Marine Conservation Society and WWF-Australia said today that Australia's governments are putting the Great Barrier Reef at risk by failing to implement the World Heritage Committee recommendations around rapid industrialisation.

WWF- Australia's Richard Leck, who has been attending the World Heritage Meeting as an observer, said Australia had been put 'on notice' by the World Heritage Committee.

"Australian governments now have a firm deadline of June 2014 for action to avoid the global icon being placed on an international list of shame. This will be a crucial 12 months for ensuring the future of our reef and the AU\$6 billion tourism industry that relies on it," Mr Leck said.

"The decision reinforces the strong concerns that scientists, fishers, local communities and people around the world have for the reef,

"The World Heritage Committee was explicit that the most precious pristine areas of the reef including Keppel Bay, north Curtis Island and the northern section of the reef need to be protected," said Mr Leck.

Felicity Wishart Great Barrier Reef Campaign Director said that the government had made some progress on water quality and farm runoff but that these gains could be overshadowed by millions of tonnes of dredging and dumping for planned mega-port development along the coast.

"Both major political parties had the opportunity to support the recommendations of the World Heritage Committee through changes to Australian environmental laws put before the Australian Senate on Monday night. Both political parties refused.

"We need both major political parties to recognise just how serious the threat to the reef is. Australian scientists are concerned, the World Heritage Committee is concerned, and yesterday millions of people tweeted their concerns.

"Yet the Queensland Government continues to fast track large scale port developments on the Great Barrier Reef and the Australian Government is failing to stop them.

"Australian state and federal governments must heed the World Heritage Committee recommendation and put the brakes on the rapid industrialisation of the coastline. There should be no more port development or dredging and dumping until a plan to properly protect the reef is in place.

"Right now there is a proposal to dredge millions of tonnes of seafloor less than 50kms from the Whitsunday Islands on Environment Minister Burke's desk. What will Tony Burke now do? Australians and the world deserve to know.

"We will continue this campaign to protect the reef from unacceptable industrialisation" concluded

Ms Wishart.

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