



Gladstone Conservation Council Inc.

Queensland, Australia.
ABN: 48 166 710041

P.O. Box 127
Gladstone Mail Exchange
GLADSTONE QLD 4680
Phone: 0499 577 115

E: gladstoneconservationcouncil@hotmail.com

Webpage: www.gladstoneconservationcouncil.com.au

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/GladstoneConservationCouncil>

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Dredge dumping - Abbot Point

“A dud and waste of time.”

Those were my words for Andrew Powell.

I was counselled by my peers to take a more constructive approach.

But then I try to reconcile sacrificing my precious time documenting the many obvious and not so obvious rational arguments against the development proposals at Abbot Point, only to read:

[“Queensland government plans to have bulldozers ready to roll on the project on New Year’s Day.”](#)

Now this is entirely consistent with my experience with so called “consultation” by government. Why pretend our input will contribute one iota to the decision government has already made?

See, that is where I see Andrew as a waste of my time. Had he the courage to be honest he would say to all of us, don’t waste your time, we are going to bulldoze the Caley valley wetlands.

But why bulldoze these ecologically important wetlands?

There are strong indicators that the whole idea of developing a new coal province in the Galilee basin is wrong. It confounds me why the current political hue, who adopt the arrogance to claim superior economic management, want to use tax payers money against the people’s interest (and wishes) in a dud venture. They are certainly no stranger to inflicting environmental harm pursuing failed ventures, but why?

The Deputy Premier, Seeney was reported to coerce the Environment movement, that we had better get on board and support the on-land dumping as is, including the proposed damage to the Caley wetlands. We had better support it or the Government would revert to the already approved dumping in the Marine Park.

Now, we cannot expect Andrew as a junior minister to be briefed beforehand by the likes of Seeney about statements like this regarding environmental matters, but where was Andrew subsequently? Did he not travel overseas to woo the UN delegates that the reef is in safe hands and that he and Australia are committed to stop dumping on the Great Barrier Reef? Is Seeney’s threat not supposing that at least the Queensland Deputy Premier is not inclined to honour this international commitment? Is the Government not [spending taxpayer money sending diplomats to lobby](#) UN committee members with a stated commitment not to dump in the reef? Are we perpetrating a lie on the international community? Is Andrew’s silence as the principal in charge of the protection of Queensland’s environment in agreement with this deception?



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I am [on the record](#) in more ways than one, trying to resolve the science around dredging of Gladstone harbour. The obfuscation by the authorities continues until this day, none as egregious as the shifting of thresholds for metal concentrations in the harbour's water to avoid FAIL flags in the [report card](#).

My analysis has led me to the conclusion that the [dredging of anaerobic sediment](#) using suction dredging has been an important source of metals which entered Gladstone harbour resulting in the observed ecological stress starting in October 2010. Very specifically the process of intimately mixing sulphide bearing sediment with oxygenated carrier water from the dredging operation producing highly stable metal colloids in pond discharge water, which became bioavailable. This resulted in unseasonal toxic algae blooms, human Shewanella infections and pervasive disease in a wide range of species of the harbour.

Outside of the fact that the QLD Government will be investing in a dud economic venture and will be damaging ecologically significant wetlands, the on-land dumping will repeat the mistake made in Gladstone. Unless a robust method is devised to remove the metal colloids from the pond discharge, high levels of metals will be made bioavailable and give effect to the exact same syndrome as that experienced in Gladstone Harbour.

Just don't do it.

Sincerely,

Jan Arens

President – Gladstone Conservation Council