

20 REASONS FOR SCRAPPING THE TOONDAH PDA OVER PROTECTED WETLANDS AND KOALA HABITAT

The Queensland Government's 67 hectare Toondah Harbour Priority Development Area (PDA) plan, clumsily disguised as an "upgrade" of Cleveland's "Gateway to Straddie" ferry terminal, is a bad idea. Here are 20 reasons why the Palaszczuk Government should revoke the PDA and/or why the Federal Government should reverse Josh Frydenberg's "controlled action" decision and immediately refuse approval, using special legislation if necessary.

The reasons include crucial environmental considerations, our international obligations and reputation, poor planning, and questions of democracy, transparency and the influence of large "donations" on our politicians and others.

1. The ABC's investigative reports revealed in December 2018 the Federal Government's scientific and legal experts have already concluded that the Walker Ramsar wetlands plan [is "clearly unacceptable" under the EPBC Act and would breach Australia's obligations under the Ramsar Convention](#) .
2. [The science has already been done](#). That's why the Toondah wetlands were included when the world's agreement for the protection of internationally important wetlands was invoked in 1993 to declare the Moreton Bay Ramsar site.
3. More recent research highlights even more the need to protect [the seagrass meadows, mangroves and salt marsh in and near the Toondah wetlands because these are important carbon sinks](#), one of the Earth's defences against climate change and its impacts.
4. The Ramsar Agreement, signed by Australia, prohibits the reclamation of any part of a Ramsar site [unless for "urgent national interests"](#). (clause 2.5 Ramsar Convention). Clearly, there are no urgent national interests in a property developer profiting from building 3,600 high-rise units over the top of Ramsar protected wetlands.
5. The ABC's [Background Briefing investigation](#) revealed also that the Federal Government's own legal experts advised then Environment Minister, now Treasurer, Josh Frydenberg, that the Walker plan would breach the Ramsar Agreement. Australia's own environment laws ([EPBC Act, section 138](#)) also require the Minister to abide by the Ramsar agreement.
6. The Toondah tidal wetlands provide food and habitat for many marine and migratory species, including the critically endangered Far Eastern Curlew and the Great Knot. Moreton Bay is one of their most important habitats.
7. [The Toondah Koalas are unlikely to survive](#) an estimated 7,000 to 10,000 people, (and their vehicles etc) occupying Walker's Toondah development.
8. The Toondah PDA also incorporates historic parklands, and areas of [indigenous cultural heritage value](#).
9. Contrary to misleading statements by some politicians and others, Walker Corp's 2018 proposal is essentially the same as its first two proposals (2015 and 2017). It still involves destroying over 40 hectares/100 acres of Ramsar protected tidal wetlands for high-rise units and a marina.

10. Walker Corp/Group has a long history of making large political donations to both major parties - [\\$Millions in declared donations](#) over two decades, including [over \\$240,000 declared in 2016](#). Walker donated \$25,000 to the Federal Liberal Party before it lodged its initial application for approval and then \$200,000 on 31 May, 2016, after it became known that the Government's experts intended to advise the Federal Minister that Walker's Toondah wetlands plan was "clearly unacceptable".
11. [Walker Group/Corp has paid ZERO income tax for the last four corporate tax](#) years on total earnings over \$1.5 Billion, including \$438 Million income last year. It also has a [poor environmental history](#), with a number of offences committed.
12. Protecting the [Toondah wetlands was the driving force](#) for the Goss Labor Government causing the declaration of the Moreton Bay Ramsar site in 1993. (The Palaszczuk led Labor Party when in opposition strongly opposed PDA's with Jackie Trad claiming they were intended to line the pockets of the LNP's "developer mates". When she became the Minister, [Trad gave the Toondah plan the 'green light' and expanded the LNP's proposed number of units](#) from around 800 to 3,600 – a 450% increase.
13. The Toondah plan to a significant extent has been promoted using lies and myths. [The Mayor of Redlands in particular has seriously misled the public](#) about the need for the proposed Toondah Harbour gross over-development.
14. In reality, the whole proposal is poor planning. An estimated population of 7,000 to 10,000 people living in 3,600 units would likely cause chaos on roads, public transport, hospital, schools etc.
15. The proposal includes [handing over part of the ferry terminal area to the developer](#) and reducing the size of the terminal. This will eliminate competition and make getting to Straddie harder and probably more expensive.
16. The Toondah wetlands proposal [conflicts with Queensland Labor Party policies](#) – and from late 2018 is now also contrary to national Labor Party policies – see [page 248 of Labor's national policies](#).
17. The Ferry terminal, which is not within Ramsar wetlands, could be upgraded at a modest cost. For example, before the last State election, Labor promised \$4 Million to construct a new Moreton Island [barge terminal at Scarborough](#).
18. The indirect impact from dredge spoil and other pollution on wider areas of the [Moreton Bay Ramsar site](#), including [its coral reefs](#), would likely be considerable. A [similar Walker proposal for tidal wetlands near Hobart](#) was [refused Federal approval](#). One major reason was the risk of damage from current carried dredge spoil and other pollution to 'wetlands of international importance' (Ramsar wetlands) 12 KILOMETRES from the proposed dredging and 'reclamation' site.
19. The Toondah proposal to destroy protected areas for private profit would be a dangerous precedent for destructive exploitation of other protected areas.
20. Publicly owned foreshore land and publicly owned, protected Moreton Bay wetlands should not be handed over to a property developer to generate private profit. Sale of public assets, let alone giving them away, has consistently been opposed by Queenslanders.