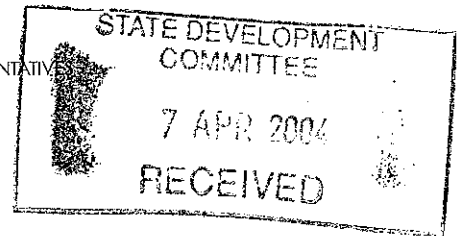




# Bruce Baird MP

FEDERAL MEMBER FOR COOK



29 March 2004

Attn. Ms Cathy Nunn - Committee Officer  
Legislative Council Committee on State Development  
Parliament House  
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Sydney NSW 2000

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Dear Ms Nunn,

**RE:- PORT INFRASTRUCTURE INQUIRY**

Please be advised that I am the Federal Member for Cook, an electorate which includes the Southern shoreline of Botany Bay. As such, in accordance with item (2) of the above referenced inquiry's published terms of reference, I wish to make the following submission for the inquiry's consideration.

**1. *Environmental Impact:-***

I am of the understanding that up to 58 hectares of Botany Bay are to be reclaimed in order to make way for up to 6 new berths for shipping in and around the current Port Botany stevedoring facility. This equates to around 7.5 million cubic metres of sand being dredged from the floor of the bay.

Dredging this volume of sand will disturb the water table beneath the floor of the bay, which is polluted from the concentration of heavy industry and commercial utilisation of areas surrounding Port Botany. There is significant concern from both environmental and community groups that this disruption of the water table will release a toxic plume of heavy metals and pollutants, discharging it into the already struggling marine ecology of Botany Bay.

I am also of the understanding that computer modelling of wave and current action in the Bay show that this toxic plume would travel in a Southerly direction, across Botany Bay. This would potentially endanger the Towra Point Nature Reserve, an area of such environmental worth that it was placed under the protection of the international RAMSAR Treaty in the 1980's.

Towra Point is unique in the Sydney basin. The Towra Point Nature Reserve contains more than 50 per cent of the remaining mangrove communities in the Sydney basin. It also contains a staggering 95 per cent of the remaining salt marsh communities. Additionally, it is the home to species which are

classified as endangered under NSW Statute. These species include the Little Tern, the Green and Gold Bell Frog and in the seagrass in the Towra estuary, the Dugong.

There is also concern that contamination from the hexachlorobenzene (HCB) dump on the Northern shore of Botany Bay will be released with the proposed dredging for the expansion of Port Botany.

Furthermore, with the increased number of deep draught vessels utilising Port Botany, there is concern that further exotic organisms will be released into the ecology of Botany Bay through the increased discharge of bilge water into the Bay.

The Committee may recall the devastating effect the introduction of the exotic QX Virus had on oyster farming in the Georges River, a shallow tidal river whose estuary enters into Botany Bay at Sans Souci, to the South West of the Port Botany facility.

Finally, the proposed wharf included in the proposal to expand Port Botany will surround the Penrhyn Estuary, the last remaining shorebird habitat on the Northern side of Botany Bay. This will have at best disruptive and at worst, catastrophic effects on this last remaining habitat on the Northern shore of the Bay.

## **2. Transport**

The transport infrastructure is simply not in place to handle the increased load of this expanded facility. It is estimated that the proposal for expansion in its current form would result in an additional 6,000 truck movements per day through Botany, causing further congestion on transport corridors such as the M5, the Princes Highway, the Grand Parade in Brighton Le Sands and West Botany Street from Kyeemagh to its Southern extremity in Kogarah.

Additionally, the rail infrastructure which is *in situ* is similarly unable to cope with the forecast 1.6 million additional container movements through the area following the expansion.

## **3. Security**

Since September 11, nations including Australia have necessarily become more focussed on security issues. The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Transport and Regional Services, the Hon John Anderson MP, has recently raised concerns over the security of shipping and its vulnerability to a potential terrorist attack.

Port Botany, surrounded as it is by a mixture of low and medium density housing and with an increase in some high density housing is a heavily populated area.

In the areas surrounding Port Botany, there are vast storage of oil, gas and organic and inorganic chemicals in suburbs such as Banksmeadow, Botany and Matraville. The continued expansion of the Port, with the corollary expansion of the storage of these chemicals and inflammable materials would render the area more susceptible to a potential terrorist strike. The possibility of a flow on effect of a concerted terrorist strike would likely render a high death toll.

#### **4. Alternatives**

I would contend that the Committee would be better to consider the location of these increased Port facilities in regional areas such as Newcastle to the North of Sydney and Port Kembla to the South.

Newcastle, formerly reliant on employment provided by BHP Steel and its shipyards, has been suffering an economic downturn since BHP began to rationalise its Australian based steel business. Port Kembla, similarly reliant on BHP Steel is beginning to suffer a similar economic downturn.

The employment that would be generated through the growth of stevedoring facilities in these two areas would prove to be an boon for the local economies.

I further note that the unemployment rate in the areas surrounding Newcastle average between 6.9 and 7.3 per cent. In the areas surrounding Port Kembla, the rate is higher, averaging between 8 and 10.1 per cent.

Neither Port Botany nor Newcastle have environmentally sensitive areas that are as susceptible to environmental ruin as the marine environment in Botany Bay.

Additionally, Port Botany and Newcastle, being far less densely populated than inner suburban Sydney, will not have the same issues with the increase in both vehicular and rail movements. They will also be better able to increase the capacity of there respective transport infrastructure, with far less disruption than that that would occur in Southern Sydney.

#### **5. Conclusion**

In consideration of the evidence that has been submitted to me by constituents and environmental groups, as well as information that I have attained through my own inquiries, I would urge the Committee to reject any proposal to increase the capacity of the Port Botany container terminus. I base this assertion on the following;

- (a) The environmental detriment that would occur to Botany Bay, an area which is both culturally, environmentally and historically valuable;

- (b) The limited transport infrastructure that is available to service the expanded Port, and keeping in mind the disruption that would occur to local residents with the expansion of both motorways and rail capacity;
- (c) The additional security risk that would be posed by increasing the facility; and
- (d) The opportunity to place the increased container handling facilities in areas that would attain a greater economic benefit, such as Port Kembla and Newcastle.

In anticipation, I look forward to the Committee's consideration of my submission and look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

In the meantime, should you wish to discuss any of the areas outlined herein, please don't hesitate to contact me anytime.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bruce Baird', written over a horizontal line.

**Hon Bruce Baird MP**  
**Federal Member for Cook**

BL 290304