

Keppel And Fitzroy Delta Alliance (KAFDA)

Media Release - 13 Oct 2011

Dredging for Coal Ports in the Fitzroy Delta threatens “Our Snubbie”

The Australian Snubfin Dolphin was recognised as a new separate species in 2005. It was formerly known as the Irrawaddy dolphin which is found in waters off Asia

“The Australian Snubfin (*Orcaella heinsohni*) is the only endemic species of dolphin in Australia.” said KAFDA spokesman Ian Herbert. “This means it is the only dolphin found in Australia and nowhere else.”

Research by Daniele Cagnazzi indicates that the population of Snubfin Dolphin at the mouth of the Fitzroy River is genetically isolated from other small geographically isolated populations to the north.

“There are fewer than 90 individuals including juveniles in the Fitzroy Delta. The Snubfin dolphin prefers shallow waters around 2 to 8 metres for feeding and socialising.”

Their current range is between the Fitzroy River mouth, the north end of Curtis Island and the southern reaches of Keppel bay. This suits them perfectly because of the shallow water. The next population is found some 400 km away at Proserpine.

“This genetically isolated population of dolphin is threatened with extinction if these Coal Port proposals go ahead, because all the dredging and shipping activity will occur in their space. They have nowhere else to go, or they would already be there.” said Mr Herbert. “They do not live in the open sea but in the shallow waters of the river mouth.”

KAFDA urges the community to attend the public information meeting it is organising in Yeppoon on Tuesday 18th October at the Town Hall from 6pm to 8 pm to find out the full plans and implications associated with the proposed coal terminal developments in the Fitzroy River Delta. KAFDA believes the only chance there is to halt these proposals is for the community to stand as one and send the strongest possible message to government that our river delta and coast are off limits to such huge industrialisation.
