



CALL TO PROTECT DELTA, BAY & DOLPHINS

Capricorn Conservation Council (CCC) is calling on the State Government to implement an environmental Plan of Management for the Fitzroy Delta and Keppel Bay amid concerns about the impact of proposed shipping and port infrastructure on the Bay's threatened populations of Australian Snubfin and Indo-pacific Humpback Dolphins. Dr Daniele Cagnazzi, from the University of Southern Queensland presented the results of his research into these threatened marine cetaceans at Kershaw House in Rockhampton recently.

“Dr Cagnazzi's research shows that there are three core populations of the Indo-Pacific Humpback Dolphin at Port Curtis, Shoalwater and Keppel Bay/Fitzroy River, and only one population of the Australian Snubfin Dolphin localized in the mouth of the Fitzroy River. There are only about 80 'snubbies' left in the Fitzroy Delta, the site of two proposed coal ports.” said CCC Acting Coordinator Ms James.

CCC is concerned about the impacts the proposed industrial developments actions will have on the Snubfin and Humpback Dolphins in the Fitzroy Delta and Port Curtis region. “These dolphins are vulnerable and could be pushed towards extinction. Research indicates that we can't afford to lose any individual dolphin, yet we have seen the death of 5 dolphins in Port Curtis during the past year” said Ms James.

“We risk losing these unique dolphins through a range of threats, such as increased coastal development, habitat disturbance & loss, impacts to food supply, increased boating and shipping traffic & potential strikes, seismic surveying & dredging, entanglement in fishing nets and excess shipping noise.”

“When all or some of these threats occur together, this cumulatively increases stress and decreases the health of the dolphins, thereby increasing the risk and occurrence of disease and deaths in the population. This is of concern since research has shown the Snubfin population in the Fitzroy may be a genetically isolated population.” said Ms James.

Dr Cagnazzi has advised that separate conservation plans for the two dolphin species in the region need to be developed. CCC is calling on the State and Federal Governments to consider a Plan of Management for the Keppel Bay and the Fitzroy Delta, parts of which are within a

World Heritage Area, to help protect fisheries, dolphins, turtles and coral reefs from the cumulative impacts of planned developments, increased shipping and coastal population increases.

“Queensland has an obligation to the rest of Australia and the signatories of the World Heritage Convention to protect the values of this pristine area. We are on the brink of mucking things up. Plans of Management have been implemented in the Whitsundays and Hinchinbrook areas, why not the Fitzroy and Keppel Bay which is one of the most productive fisheries in the State?” said Ms James.
