

Alliance to Save Hinchinbrook Inc.

HINCHINBROOK ISLAND RESORT: TO BE OR NOT TO BE ?

The Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service is facing the ultimate test of its parks management ethic – whether or not to transfer to Keith Williams an existing special lease for an old resort that should never have been allowed on Hinchinbrook Island.

ASH has long held the view that the resort lease, acknowledged to be an historical anomaly, should lapse when the present owner quits, not be sold on for private gain and public loss.

There is nothing in the *Hinchinbrook Island National Park Management Plan* to prevent expansion of present resort size or activities.

Despite Keith Williams' recent assurances that he would not double resort numbers, ASH has no doubt that he has been lobbying for increase in numbers and access to island sites such as Zoe Bay, Ramsay Bay and the Thorsborne Trail. These desires are evidenced in documents going back to 1993.

Old documents (received under Freedom of Information legislation) also evidence the developer's desire for a commercial monopoly over Hinchinbrook Island, his views against public consultation, and his practice of renegotiating agreement conditions after signing.

In view of the developer's environmental record and expressed expansionist desires for Hinchinbrook Island, ASH has no confidence that Hinchinbrook Island's unique wildlife and wilderness character would survive should the resort lease be transferred to a Keith Williams company.

ASH calls on the Minister to heed the history of the developer's latest development endeavours – just across the Hinchinbrook Channel, at Oyster Point.

- Oyster Point is where a King Canute inspired attempt to build breakwater walls has resulted in six months of rock dumping with no end in sight. As the wall is raised, the lower rocks sink ever deeper into the mud.
- Oyster Point is where acid sulphate soils were exposed, allowing sulphuric acid to leach into adjacent lands.
- Oyster Point is where some 10 hectares of coastal forest, listed as "high conservation value" and destined for national park declaration, have died as a result of Port Hinchinbrook related site works.
- Oyster Point is a prime example of the inability of Commonwealth, Queensland and local governments to contain the adverse environmental and aesthetic impacts of development construction activities.

Ms Moorhouse said "The precise reasons for the appalling situation at Oyster Point are not important. What counts now is that the Oyster Point record stands as a continuing saga of poor environmental management with little remediation and no end in sight – so why would anyone expect anything better from this developer, on Hinchinbrook Island?"

"The Hinchinbrook Island Resort has been kept low-key in size and character solely through the philosophy and environmental sensitivity of past lessees, in consultation with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service. Even so, the resort's sewage treatment plant is outside the lease area, in the national park proper. The resort is already too large."

"Given the history of Oyster Point as an example of Keith Williams' development ideas, it would be foolish to expect a sudden change of heart and philosophy for the resort on Hinchinbrook Island."

"Can the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service resist the demands of the developer and the developer lobby within the Queensland Government machinery?"

"We call on the Environment Minister Lindy Nelson Carr to support the QPWS in securing full protection of this unique island national park from inappropriate developer pressures – no transfer of the special lease."

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Margaret Thorsborne (Pres ASH) (of Cardwell) also available for interview.