



## **BALACLAVA ISLAND COAL EXPORT TERMINAL PROJECT**

November 2011

### **Response to community concerns regarding local ecosystems**

Xstrata Coal is conducting scientific studies and detailed planning to ensure the proposed Balaclava Island Coal Export Terminal can coexist with local ecosystems once it is built.

The results of these studies will be included in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the project, which is due to be released for public comment early next year. The EIS will assess the likely environmental, social, economic and cultural heritage impacts of the project.

It will also recommend how the proposed terminal should be built and operated to preserve the long-term health, function and viability of the natural environment.

The EIS involves consultation with both the Australian and Queensland Governments, local councils and nearby communities.

Xstrata Coal takes the concerns of the community very seriously and is actively using the EIS process to consider and respond to all potential issues. Xstrata Coal has conducted a series of community meetings throughout the region to provide all interested parties with the opportunity to raise concerns and learn about the proposed terminal.

### **Dredging**

Comprehensive information about the dredging proposed for the Balaclava Island Coal Export Terminal will be included in the EIS. A strategy is being developed that will allow dredging to be carried out and dredge spoil to be disposed of safely without harming the marine environment or fisheries.

The amount of dredging required for the proposed terminal is approximately 5.5 million cubic metres. This is about 10% of the total dredging required for the proposed projects in the area including Gladstone.

#### No contaminants have been detected in sediments to be dredged:

Sampling of sediments at over 100 locations along the proposed dredge channel as part of the EIS studies has shown there is no apparent risk of contaminants being disturbed during dredging.

Analysis of samples showed the material proposed to be dredged is considered "clean" under the National Assessment Guidelines for Dredging (NAGD, 2009), and hence is suitable for offshore disposal.



Samples were tested for contaminants in accordance with the National Assessment Guidelines for Dredging (NAGD, 2009). Results showed all inorganic contaminants were well below the relevant Australia and New Zealand Environment Conservation Council (ANZECC) Guidelines.

No actual Acid Sulfate Soils (ASS) found in areas proposed to be dredged, Potential Acid Sulfate Soils (PASS) are present:

Sampling carried out to date for the project (at over 100 locations along the proposed dredge channel, and in accordance with the National Assessment Guidelines for Dredging) indicates the presence of Potential Acid Sulfate Soils (PASS) but no Actual Acid Sulfate Soils (AASS) in the area to be dredged.

PASS refers to material which contains a high level of sulfidic material (naturally occurring) that could potentially oxidise if exposed to oxygen for a period of more than 12 hours. AASS refers to material that has already been exposed to oxygen for 12+ hours and hence the sulfidic material in the soil has oxidised, releasing sulphuric acid into the environment.

The Queensland coastline has a high occurrence of PASS due to the underlying geology, but this does not necessarily mean that significant environmental impacts will occur as a result of development.

Xstrata Coal proposes to dispose of the dredge spoil offshore. This means the material will not be exposed to air by being kept underwater and therefore will not oxidise and release sulphuric acid.

Offshore disposal is the Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management's (DERM) preferred method of disposal for PASS.

Ensuring dredge spoil will not spread once disposed offshore:

As part of the EIS investigations for the Balaclava Island Coal Export Terminal, Xstrata Coal is completing three-dimensional modelling of the proposed dredging and spoil disposal. This will be used to design a dredging program that ensures currents and tides do not spread dredge spoil away from disposal areas.

### **Coexisting with the snubfin dolphin and other marine megafauna**

Xstrata Coal has conducted detailed scientific studies of all marine megafauna that use Keppel Bay, including the snubfin dolphin, to understand the animals' use of Keppel Bay and how they may be affected by the proposed terminal. The results of these studies will be published in the EIS.

Three types of surveying were used in these studies. Underwater acoustic recording devices were used to identify and track different species, aerial surveys were conducted and boat-based surveys were conducted over a period of a year to understand the snubfin dolphins' and other species' seasonal movements and behaviour.



Xstrata Coal also drew on the results of previous surveys of snubfin dolphins and scientific research conducted by biologists and worked with other parties that are also investigating the species. The studies have helped to build knowledge of how snubfin dolphins use Keppel Bay and how they coexist with the existing nearby port of Port Alma. This information is being used to design the proposed terminal and plan construction.

Research has shown that the snubfin dolphin and other inshore dolphin species coexist with ports around Australia, such as at Port Alma, Townsville and Gladstone, and ports around the world. Therefore, Xstrata Coal is confident the proposed terminal could be built and operated sensitively to allow it to coexist with the dolphins and the ecosystems upon which they depend.

Research and monitoring of the snubfin dolphin will continue beyond the EIS and approvals period.

### **Minimising disturbance to bird habitats**

Scientific studies conducted for the EIS have included bird surveys and mapping of habitats that different species of birds depend on throughout the proposed project area.

This information has been used to choose locations for the various pieces of infrastructure that make up the proposed Balaclava Island Coal Export Terminal. Reports from experts about how different species, such as the Capricorn yellow chat, use different habitats in different seasons and conditions will also be used to schedule construction activities. This information will be included in the EIS, which will be released for public comment.

### **Minimising disturbance to marine habitats**

The area where Xstrata Coal proposes to build the Balaclava Island Coal Export Terminal and to establish a shipping channel has been chosen specifically to avoid the nearby Fitzroy River Delta Fish Habitat Area. Similarly the areas designated by the Queensland Government for ship anchorage have also been chosen to avoid sensitive areas.

Fish Habitat Areas protect natural fish habitats by limiting development within and adjacent to the defined area, while allowing for continued community use and access.

Stakeholder consultation has indicated fishing activities are currently concentrated along the sand banks to the north of the approach channel, along the mangrove fringes of Balaclava Island and in the numerous tidal creeks. These areas would experience little or no effect from the proposed dredging activities.

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